



**EXPERIENTIAL TESTIMONIES  
BEFORE THE JUDGMENT SEAT  
OF CHRIST**

**VOLUME 3**

**THE CHURCH OF ALMIGHTY GOD**





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# 1. A Priest's Road Home

By Zhang Jian, China

My family has been Catholic for generations. When I was 20, I decided to become a monk and give my life in service to the Lord. After seven years of systematic theological training in the seminary, I was consecrated as a priest at 27, and at 30, I was promoted to be the abbot of a monastery. At that time, I was incredibly arrogant. I felt that I was very young to be the abbot of a monastery, and the priests and monks all said that they benefited from listening to my sermons, so I thought that I understood the Bible better than other people and had knowledge of the Lord. I thought that when the Lord came, I would definitely have His approval and be able to enter the kingdom of heaven.

One evening in June 2001, Deacon Wang came to me in a hurry to say that two Christians had come, and that they spoke very profoundly about faith. When I heard they were Christians, I didn't take them seriously at all. I thought, "The Catholic Church is the true church, and it possesses the full truth of Jesus' salvation. I've been through many years of theological training, and studied each chapter of the Bible line by line. It's a perfect opportunity; I'll go and discuss the question of faith with them and persuade them to convert to Catholicism." After that, Deacon Wang took me to meet the two of them. They were Brother Cheng Shi and Brother Xiang Guang. When I learned that they had only believed in God for six or seven years, I looked down upon them even more, but I still talked to them patiently about the history of Catholicism. I urged them that if they wanted to be sure of entering the kingdom of heaven, they should join the true church, the Catholic Church. But not only did the two brothers not want to convert, Xiang Guang said, "In both Catholicism and Christianity, the state

of the church is very desolate now. Preachers read and preach scripture without enlightenment, they aren't able to deliver any new or profound sermons. Many preachers have even begun to pursue worldly things and have left the path of service. Believers feel even more negative and weak; their faith has gone cold. During congregations, they discuss their daily lives or how to make money, they introduce each other to jobs and matchmake. There are also many believers who pursue worldly trends, and some have even returned to the secular world. How is the state of the church any different from the state of the temple in the latter days of the Age of Law? At the end of the Age of Law, the temple was clearly desolate. People were exchanging money and trading cattle, sheep, and doves there—it had become a den of thieves. This showed that the Holy Spirit was not working in the temple. Where was the Holy Spirit working, then? At that time, the Lord Jesus was already carrying out new work outside the temple, so the work of the Holy Spirit shifted onto the work of the Lord Jesus. It's a bit like how a stove can make a room feel warm in winter, but if the stove is taken away, the room gradually grows cold. In the same way, when the Holy Spirit works in the church, the brothers and sisters have faith and seek passionately, but once the work of the Holy Spirit is lost, the church gradually becomes desolate. Churches everywhere are in the same state as the temple in the latter days of the Age of Law. They are all desolate. Have you ever considered whether the work of the Holy Spirit has shifted? Where does the Holy Spirit work today?" I was quite surprised by these words. I didn't expect them to connect the temple's desolation in the latter days of the Age of Law with the Lord Jesus' work. This understanding was quite new and refreshing. We had never understood things that way in our church. I also agreed with their appraisal of the state of the church. Among other things, many of the faithful had already stopped observing practices like

reading scripture and keeping the Lord's Day. They were just like nonbelievers, pursuing wealth and worldly pleasures, and the number of people in the church kept dwindling. Those were facts. The church was indeed desolate. Because the brothers' words were in line with the facts and the Bible, and there was some depth to their understanding, I thought, "I've studied the Bible for many years without comprehending this, but they can speak of it after only a few years of belief. It seems I've underestimated them." Seeing that I couldn't persuade them, I simply echoed a few of their words, and found an excuse to go home.

At that time, I did think about whether the Holy Spirit's work was shifting. But I also believed that the Holy Spirit was the soul of the Catholic Church, so if the Holy Spirit didn't work there, where else could He work? I couldn't understand it, so I didn't think about it too much. After that, Cheng Shi and Xiang Guang came to see me twice again. They said, "God has become flesh to express new words, to do the work of judging and purifying man, to deliver us from the bondage of sin, and bring us into God's kingdom." At the time, I felt very resistant, thinking, "Do you really understand the Bible? The Lord Jesus has already completed the work of redemption, and in the last days He will descend with the clouds as a Spirit to determine people's outcomes. How could He possibly become flesh and do new work?" Then I remembered that not long ago I'd heard there were some people preaching about Eastern Lightning. These people testified that the Lord had already returned incarnate and was doing new work, and their sermons were very profound. It seemed quite probable that Cheng Shi and Xiang Guang believed in Eastern Lightning. But I thought that the Catholic Church was the true church, and I had never heard of Eastern Lightning before that. As they did not belong to the true church, everything they preached must be wrong. I couldn't keep listening to them, so I interrupted



and asked, “You believe in Eastern Lightning, don’t you? You say the Lord has become flesh again and is doing new work. That is impossible. I don’t believe it! If you mean to preach this gospel to me, save yourselves the effort!” Cheng Shi and Xiang Guang kept patiently fellowshipping with me, but my notions were too strong at the time, and I didn’t listen to them at all. I angrily told them, “What you preach conflicts with my faith, and I don’t want to hear it anymore!” When they saw I had this kind of attitude, they stopped talking. They spoke with me twice again after that, but I was very resistant. No matter what they said, it all went in one ear and out the other. Finally, they left me a copy of the book **The Word Appears in the Flesh**, and urged me to investigate it. Seeing how earnest they were, I felt too embarrassed to refuse and kept the book. When I saw that thick copy of **The Word Appears in the Flesh**, I felt a little curious, and wanted to know exactly what was written in it. So, I looked through the book’s table of contents, and then flipped through the pages. I found that some parts of the book differed from our traditional teachings, concerning things like whether the Trinity really exists and the future outcome and destination of mankind, so I closed the book and didn’t look at it again. At the time, I thought it was my duty to protect the flock as abbot of the monastery, and that I needed to inform the priests and monks to stop them from being misled. So, during one of the novice retreats, I said to the priests and monks, “We are in the last days, and many false christs are appearing. A few days ago, I met two people from Eastern Lightning. They said that the Lord Jesus has returned, that He has become flesh and is doing new work. How could that be possible?” I held up **The Word Appears in the Flesh** and continued, “Look, this is their book. I’ve skimmed through it, and what it teaches is different from our traditional beliefs. I am certain that this doesn’t come from God! You must be on guard. Do not read their books, do not meet with

them, and do not listen to their preaching. You must protect the church members from being misled by them!” After hearing me say that, the priests and monks all agreed that this was a critical matter of saving souls, and that the church members must be protected. Seeing that everyone was being so obedient, I felt I had done a very just thing and fulfilled my responsibility and obligation as an abbot to protect my flock. I didn’t realize that I was resisting God at all.

A few days after this incident, Xiang Guang came to see me and asked if I had read the words of Almighty God. I told him, “Almighty God’s words differ from our church’s traditional teachings, so I won’t investigate them, and I won’t let anyone else investigate them, because this is a matter of faith. We will never betray the Lord by listening to your preaching!” Xiang Guang said to me patiently, “You still haven’t read Almighty God’s words. You’ve decided that they’re not God’s voice and words, and refused to investigate them just because you found one thing in them that differs from the traditional teachings of your church. Isn’t that too rash? Almighty God says: **‘I advise you to tread the path of belief in God with care. Do not jump to conclusions; what is more, do not be casual and thoughtless in your belief in God. You should know that, at the very least, those who believe in God should possess humble and God-fearing hearts. Those who have heard the truth and yet turn their nose up at it are foolish and ignorant. Those who have heard the truth and yet carelessly jump to conclusions or condemn it are beset by arrogance. No one who believes in Jesus is qualified to curse or condemn others. You should all be someone with sense and who accepts the truth’** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. By the Time You Behold the Spiritual Body of Jesus, God Will Have Made Heaven and Earth Anew). As believers in the Lord, we must have hearts that fear God. We can’t blindly condemn God’s words and work when they

don't conform to our notions or imaginings. If we don't have a humble, seeking attitude before God, if we always evaluate God's new work and words with our own minds and imaginings, it is all too easy to commit the great sin of condemning and resisting God. Just like when the Lord Jesus came to work: Because the Pharisees saw that His words and work surpassed the law, they found something to use against Him, condemned Him, and finally instigated people into nailing Him to the cross. They seriously offended God's disposition, and they were ultimately cursed and punished by God. This was a lesson paid for in blood. Today, we must be careful in how we treat the matter of the Lord's return, because if we wrongly condemn it, we may blaspheme the Holy Spirit. The Lord Jesus said long ago: **'All manner of sin and blasphemy shall be forgiven to men: but the blasphemy against the Holy Spirit shall not be forgiven to men'** (Matthew 12:31). It would be a terrible thing to commit this sin! Since Almighty God has appeared and worked, many leaders of different denominations have blindly condemned His work in the last days. Some have even slandered and blasphemed Almighty God. Many of those who seriously resisted were punished. If we do not treat this matter carefully, we could easily forfeit our destinations." At the time, I thought, "I'm thinking of my church members and protecting them from being misled. How could this offend the Lord?" But when I thought about it more seriously, I realized that he did have a point. I didn't really know much about Eastern Lightning, yet I was so quick to condemn it, and I had preached the same to the priests and monks. If I was wrongly condemning it just like he said, this would offend God. The consequences of that were unthinkable. When this occurred to me, I said to Xiang Guang, "I've never considered that before, but I will treat this matter carefully in the future." After that, some things happened in our church that made me reflect. One time, I met with our



bishop, and he sadly told me, “Many priests in this diocese are looking for excuses to not hand in offerings, and there are some priests who are indulging in licentiousness and refuse to repent. An old priest revealed to me in private that he’d secretly diverted offerings to someone else to set up a factory....” When I heard these things, I thought, “It is a grave sin against the Lord for a priest to indulge in licentiousness or to squander and misappropriate offerings. The Lord said: **‘Unless you shall do penance, you shall all likewise perish’** (Luke 13:3). If the priests are all living in sin and never repent, how will they enter the kingdom of heaven?” In the past, these kinds of problems only arose with a few individual priests. I never imagined that so many had now fallen into depravity. Because of these things, I couldn’t help but think of the desolation of the church that Xiang Guang had described. I thought, “In the past, when the Holy Spirit worked in the church, the Holy Spirit would discipline us when we did something wrong. But now so many priests are sinning against God—why is the Holy Spirit not disciplining them? Could it be that the Holy Spirit really no longer works in our church?” At the time, I couldn’t understand this.

A while later, Brother Xiang Guang and Brother Fang Yi came to see me. At that time, I was still a little resistant. I thought, “You testify that the Lord has returned incarnate to do new work. Is there any biblical basis to this? I don’t think you have any proof! This time, I’ll ask you some questions first. If you can’t answer them, we’re done.” So, I asked, “The Bible says that in the last days, the Lord will return as a spiritual body descending with the clouds. Yet you testify that He has returned incarnate to do new work. What is your basis for saying this?” Fang Yi calmly replied, “God planned and arranged long ago that the Lord would become flesh and return in the last days. There is proof of this in the Lord Jesus’ own prophecy. Let’s look at a few verses. Luke 17:24–25 says: **‘For as the**

**lightning, that lightens out of the one part under heaven, shines to the other part under heaven; so shall also the Son of man be in His day. But first must He suffer many things, and be rejected of this generation.'** And then, **'Therefore be you also ready: for in such an hour as you think not the Son of man comes'** (Matthew 24:44), as well as, **'As the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be'** (Matthew 24:37). As you can see, these verses all mention **'the Son of man.'** What does **'the Son of man'** refer to here? We all know that the Lord Jesus is the Son of man and God incarnate. There is no doubt about that. The Son of man refers to the Spirit of God clothed in flesh to become an ordinary man—it means God incarnate. So, the Lord Jesus prophesying **'the coming of the Son of man'** shows that when He returns, it will be incarnate. In addition, the scriptures also say: **'But first must He suffer many things, and be rejected of this generation.'** What does this mean? It means that when the Lord Jesus returns, people won't know or recognize Him, that the entire generation will condemn and reject Him. It may be said that only by becoming flesh as the Son of man can God suffer greatly and be rejected by this generation. If the Lord Jesus returns as a Spirit, in His likeness as a Jewish man, majestic and appearing to all in glory, who would see Him and not bow down and worship Him? How, then, would He endure great suffering? How would He be rejected by this generation? So, when the Lord returns, it will be as the incarnate Son of man. This is beyond any doubt."

After hearing Fang Yi's fellowship, I couldn't help but feel shocked. I thought to myself: "He's right. If the Lord Jesus comes again as a spiritual body, descending with the clouds in great glory, people would fall to their knees as soon as they see Him. Who would dare reject Him? How would He suffer greatly? Only physical bodies can suffer pain. Doesn't this prove

that the Lord will come incarnate? Fang Yi's fellowship is entirely reasonable and logical! None of the theologians or spiritual figures in the religious world have been able to explain this prophecy of the Lord Jesus. They all say that it is the Lord's mystery, that humans cannot fully comprehend it. I've studied the Bible for so many years, but I've never been able to understand this prophecy. I didn't know why the Lord would suffer greatly, since He would be returning in spirit form. I never thought the people from Eastern Lightning would be able to explain the mystery of this prophecy. It's enough to really make you sit up and take notice! Could the Lord truly return incarnate? But there are many other prophecies in the Bible that mention the Lord descending with the clouds." So I asked the brothers, "Many prophecies in the Bible say that when the Lord returns, He will descend with the clouds. For example, the Lord Jesus said: **'And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all tribes of the earth mourn: and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with much power and majesty'** (Matthew 24:30). It's also prophesied in Revelation: **'Behold, He comes with the clouds, and every eye shall see Him, and they also that pierced Him. And all the tribes of the earth shall bewail themselves because of Him'** (Revelation 1:7). If He really does return incarnate, how will these prophecies be fulfilled?"

Fang Yi fellowshiped, "The Lord Jesus did prophesy that He would descend with the clouds in the last days and publicly judge all nations and peoples. These prophecies are sure to be fulfilled. But first He becomes flesh in secret; He will later appear openly to all, riding the clouds. In other words, the Lord will return in two ways. First, He becomes flesh to express the truth, to do His work of judging and purifying people, and to make a group of overcomers. After that, the great disasters will start to descend, and the secret work of God incarnate will be complete. After the disasters,



God will appear in glory to all, and reward the good and punish the evil. Therefore, those who have unrepentantly resisted and condemned God during the period of His incarnation and secret work will have lost their chance of salvation completely. They will fall into the disasters, weeping and gnashing their teeth. This fulfills the prophecy in the Book of Revelation: **‘Behold, He comes with clouds; and every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him. Even so, Amen’** (Revelation 1:7).” After hearing Fang Yi’s fellowship, my heart suddenly felt open and clear. When the Lord returns, not only will He descend openly with the clouds, He will first become flesh and descend in secret. Those are the two ways in which the Lord will appear. In the past, I only knew of one—it seemed that I had an incomplete understanding of it. When I saw that Eastern Lightning had revealed the mystery of the biblical prophecies in a way that sounded reasonable and logical, I thought that this had probably come from God and was worth investigating. After that, my attitude changed completely, and I was willing to listen to their fellowship and read Almighty God’s words without resistance.

After reading Almighty God’s words for some time, I felt certain that the Lord would return incarnate, but I didn’t know how to determine that Almighty God was the returned Lord Jesus. I thought that the Catholic Church was the true church, that it possessed the full truth of Jesus’ salvation. I thought that our souls could only be saved and enter the kingdom of heaven through Catholicism. What if I accepted Almighty God, and it turned out that I had gone astray in my belief? Wouldn’t I be betraying the Lord? How could I enter the kingdom of heaven then? I still felt uneasy because I couldn’t figure out this problem. At that time, I happened to hear that Priest Yuan Yongjin had also accepted Almighty

God's work in the last days. I really wanted to meet with him, because he had been Catholic too, and our teachings and views were the same. I wanted to see how he understood this issue. A few days later, we met and I told him my concerns.

Yuan Yongjin fellowshiped with me, "I once had the same concerns as you. I was worried that accepting Almighty God meant betraying the Lord Jesus. In order to address this issue, the main thing we need to do is discern whether Almighty God and the Lord Jesus are the same Spirit, and if They are the same God at work. In the Age of Law, it was Yahweh at work, and in the Age of Grace, it was the Lord Jesus. Although God's name changed and the work that He did was different, can you say that the Lord Jesus and Yahweh are not one God? Can you say that to believe in the Lord Jesus is to betray Yahweh? Certainly not. So, one cannot determine whether They are the same God based on Their names. The most important thing is to see whether Almighty God can express the truth and do the work of saving mankind. As long as Almighty God can express the truth and God's voice, and do the work of saving mankind, then He is God Himself, and He and Yahweh and the Lord Jesus are the same God. We all know that in the Age of Law, Yahweh issued laws and commandments to guide the lives of mankind, so that people could know what sin is, how to offer sacrifices to atone for sins, and how to worship God. At the end of the Age of Law, people were sinning more and more, and there were not enough sacrifices to offer for all of their sins. People were all in danger of being condemned and dying by the law, so Yahweh prophesied through the prophet: **'Behold a virgin shall be with child, and bring forth a son, and they shall call His name Emmanuel'** (Matthew 1:23), **'For a CHILD IS BORN to us, and a son is given to us, and the government is upon His shoulder'** (Isaiah 9:6). These words told the Israelites that the Messiah would come, and that He would

be the sin offering that redeems humankind. As promised, God then became flesh as the Lord Jesus and did the work of redeeming mankind, building on the foundation of the work of law. The Lord Jesus expressed many truths, bestowed man with the way of repentance, and then was crucified for mankind as an eternal sin offering, thereby completing the work of redeeming all mankind. After that, as long as people accepted Jesus Christ as their Savior and repented to Him, God would forgive their sins and they would not die for violating the law. People were qualified to come before God to pray and obtain His grace and peace. So, the work of the Lord Jesus completely fulfilled the prophecies of the Old Testament. It delivered people from the bondage of the law, ended the Age of Law, and brought mankind into the Age of Grace. That is enough to prove that the Lord Jesus is the Savior and the coming of the Messiah. The Lord Jesus and Yahweh are one Spirit and one God, just as the Lord Jesus said: **‘I am in the Father, and the Father in Me’** (John 14:11), **‘I and the Father are one’** (John 10:30). After the Lord Jesus finished the work of redemption, those who believe in the Lord are forgiven for their sins, but man’s sinful nature has not yet been resolved. People can still frequently sin and resist the Lord, and they are not completely free from the bondage of sin. To give a few examples: We still often lie and deceive for personal gain. We can still be jealous, hate others, and contend for power and interests. When we suffer a sickness or calamity, we still blame the Lord, and will even deny and betray Him. It is written in the Bible: **‘Whosoever commits sin, is the servant of sin. Now the servant abides not in the house for ever; but the son abides for ever’** (John 8:34–35), **‘You shall be holy, for I am holy’** (1 Peter 1:16). God is holy, and He ultimately wants people who can fully submit to His words and achieve holiness. But now, we are still sinful, filthy, and corrupt. We have not broken away from the bondage of sin, and we are not qualified to enter the

kingdom of heaven. So the Lord Jesus prophesied many times that He would return to express the truth and do the work of judgment in the last days, that He would completely save mankind from sin and the influence of Satan, and take us into the kingdom of heaven. Just as He foretold: **‘I have yet many things to say to you: but you cannot bear them now. But when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will teach you all truth’** (John 16:12–13), **‘And if any man hears My words, and keeps them not, I do not judge him: for I came not to judge the world, but to save the world. He that despises Me, and receives not My words, has one that judges him; the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day’** (John 12:47–48). And in 1 Peter 4:17, it says: **‘For the time is, that judgment should begin at the house of God.’** And as He promised, the Lord Jesus has returned incarnate in the last days as Almighty God to express all the truths required to purify and save humankind. Building upon the foundation of the Lord Jesus’ work, Almighty God is doing the work of judgment starting with God’s house, to resolve man’s sinful nature and lead humankind into all truths, thus fulfilling the Lord Jesus’ prophecies completely.”

Then, Yuan Yongjin read a passage of Almighty God’s words to me. Almighty God says: **“Though Jesus did much work among man, He only completed the redemption of all mankind and became man’s sin offering; He did not rid man of all his corrupt disposition. Fully saving man from the influence of Satan not only required Jesus to become the sin offering and bear the sins of man, but it also required God to do even greater work to rid man completely of his satanically corrupted disposition. And so, now that man has been forgiven of his sins, God has returned to the flesh to lead man into the new age, and begun the work of chastisement and judgment. This work has brought man into a**

**higher realm. All those who submit under His dominion shall enjoy higher truth and receive greater blessings. They shall truly live in the light, and they shall gain the truth, the way, and the life”** (The Word, Vol. 1.

The Appearance and Work of God. Preface). Yuan Yongjin fellowshiped, “In the Age of Grace, the Lord Jesus did the work of redemption and absolved man’s sins, but that was only half of the work of salvation. Only Almighty God’s work of judgment will completely save humankind. We can only be saved and become worthy of entering the kingdom of heaven if we accept God’s judgment and chastisement in the last days, if we are cleansed of our corruption, if we break away from sin, and if we are no longer being misled and controlled by the devil. This means that Almighty God’s work of judgment in the last days carries on from the Lord Jesus’ work of redemption, and that it is the work that will conclude the age. Almighty God is the Lord Jesus returned, and They are one Spirit and one God.” Hearing that Yuan Yongjin’s fellowship about the three stages of work accorded with the Bible and the facts, my heart brightened. It turned out that the Lord Jesus has returned to do the work of judgment in the last days, to resolve our sinful natures, and to save us from the bondage of sin. We do indeed live in sin now, and we are powerless to extricate ourselves from it. We sin, then confess, and after confessing, we sin again. We are always trapped in this endless cycle. Even priests can’t escape the bondage of sin, let alone ordinary believers. These are all undeniable facts. In the past, I could never understand the reason for this, but now I did. We really still needed the Lord to return and do His work of fully purifying and changing people. It seemed entirely possible that Almighty God’s work of judgment in the last days came from God.

After this, Yuan Yongjin read me another passage of Almighty God’s words. Almighty God says: **“The work of today has pushed forward the**



work of the Age of Grace; that is, the work under the entire six-thousand-year management plan has moved forward. Though the Age of Grace has ended, there has been progress in God's work. Why do I say time and again that this stage of work builds upon the Age of Grace and the Age of Law? Because the work of this day is a continuation of the work done in the Age of Grace, and an advance over that done in the Age of Law. The three stages are tightly interconnected, with each link in the chain closely tied to the next. Why do I also say that this stage of work builds on that done by Jesus? Supposing that this stage did not build on the work done by Jesus, another crucifixion would have to take place in this stage, and the redemptive work of the previous stage would have to be done all over again. This would be meaningless. And so it is not that the work is completely finished, but that the age has moved forward and the level of the work has been raised higher than before. It can be said that this stage of work is built on the foundation of the Age of Law and upon the rock of Jesus' work. God's work is built stage by stage, and this stage is not a new beginning. Only the combination of the three stages of work may be deemed the six-thousand-year management plan. The work of this stage is done on the foundation of the work of the Age of Grace. If these two stages of work were unrelated, then why is the crucifixion not repeated in this stage? Why do I not bear the sins of man, but instead come to judge and chastise man directly? If My work to judge and chastise man did not follow the crucifixion, with My coming now not conceived of the Holy Spirit, then I would not be qualified to judge and chastise man. It is precisely because I am one with Jesus that I come directly to chastise and judge man. The work at this stage is built entirely on the work in the preceding stage. That is why only work of

**this kind can bring man, step by step, into salvation. Jesus and I come from one Spirit. Even though We are unrelated in Our flesh, Our Spirits are one; even though the content of what We do and the work that We take on are not the same, We are alike in essence; Our flesh takes different forms, but this is due to the change in era and the differing requirements of Our work; Our ministries are not alike, so the work We bring forth and the dispositions We reveal to man are also different. That is why what man sees and understands this day is unlike in the past, which is because of the change in era. For all that They are different in the gender and the form of Their flesh, and that They were not born of the same family, still less in the same time period, Their Spirits are nonetheless one. ... The Spirit of Jehovah is not the father of the Spirit of Jesus, and the Spirit of Jesus is not the son of the Spirit of Jehovah: They are one and the same Spirit. Similarly, the incarnate God of today and Jesus are not related by blood, but They are one, this is because Their Spirits are one. God can do the work of mercy and lovingkindness, as well as that of the righteous judgment and of chastisement of man, and that of calling down curses on man; and in the end, He can do the work of destroying the world and punishing the evil. Does He not do all of this Himself? Is this not the omnipotence of God?"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. The Two Incarnations Complete the Significance of the Incarnation). Yuan Yongjin fellowshiped, "Although the content of God's three stages of work differs and God's name is not the same in every age, this work is all done by one Spirit and one God. The three stages of work are closely linked, and each stage builds on the work of the previous one, each is more elevated and deeper than the last, and in the end this work will save people from Satan's power and bring them into God's kingdom. Therefore, we are not betraying the Lord by

accepting His new work, we are keeping pace with His work.” My heart felt even brighter at that point. Now I understood that the three stages of work are closely linked, each more elevated and deeper than the last, and that no stage of work is independent of the others. They are three stages of work done by one God. Yahweh, the Lord Jesus, and Almighty God are all one. I had always thought that the Catholic Church was the true church, that only Catholicism could save souls and bring them into the kingdom of heaven, that leaving Catholicism meant betraying the Lord and losing your chance at salvation. Now I understood that I was only holding to the Lord Jesus’ work of redemption. If I accepted Almighty God’s work of judgment, then I would be following the footsteps of the Lamb, and not betraying the Lord. However, if I remained in Catholicism and clung to the salvation of the Lord Jesus, I would not receive God’s salvation in the last days, and I wouldn’t be able to enter the kingdom of heaven. After thinking this, I was essentially certain that Almighty God’s work of judgment is God’s new work in the last days. After that, Yuan Yongjin fellowshiped with me on truths such as the significance of God’s names, the inside story of the Bible, and how God determines mankind’s ending and destination. After listening to Yuan Yongjin’s fellowship, I was filled with emotion. I had believed in God for so many years, but I had never heard such excellent preaching before. I truly gained so much on that day—I understood more than I had in all my years of believing in the Lord!

Yuan Yongjin read many of Almighty God’s words to me. I saw that Almighty God has revealed many truths and mysteries, and I felt deeply that the words of Almighty God are the voice of God. After I returned home that day, I read a passage of Almighty God’s words: **“It is not difficult to inquire into such a thing, but it requires each of us to know this one truth: He who is God incarnate shall possess the essence of God, and**

**He who is God incarnate shall possess the expression of God. Since God becomes flesh, He shall bring forth the work He intends to do, and since God becomes flesh, He shall express what He is, and shall be able to bring the truth to man, bestow life upon him, and point the way for him. Flesh that does not have the essence of God is decidedly not the incarnate God; of this there is no doubt. If man intends to inquire into whether it is God's incarnate flesh, then he must corroborate this from the disposition He expresses and the words He speaks. Which is to say, to corroborate whether or not it is God's incarnate flesh, and whether or not it is the true way, one must discriminate on the basis of His essence. And so, in determining whether it is the flesh of God incarnate, the key lies in His essence (His work, His utterances, His disposition, and many other aspects), rather than external appearance. If man scrutinizes only His external appearance, and as a result overlooks His essence, this shows that man is benighted and ignorant"** (The Word, Vol. 1.

The Appearance and Work of God. Preface). I understood from this passage that to determine whether Almighty God is the Lord Jesus appearing and working, I principally needed to look at the words He expresses and the work He does. If He can express the truth and do the work of saving and purifying people, then He must be the Lord appearing and working. The Lord Jesus once said: **"I am the way, and the truth, and the life. No man comes to the Father, but by Me"** (John 14:6). Therefore, apart from when God appears to speak and work, no one can express the truth. After that, I took time every day to read Almighty God's words. Two months later, I had understood much more, like the mysteries of the incarnation and God's names, the difference between God's work and human work, how to discern between the true Christ and false christs, and so on. I saw that Almighty God's words are rich and extensive, and they truly opened my eyes. I

thought to myself: Who could express so many truths and unravel so many mysteries if not the Lord returned? The Lord has indeed returned, and is doing the new work of judging and purifying mankind. I was entirely certain that Almighty God's work of judgment is the Lord's new work, and that Almighty God is the Lord returned! At the time, I felt overjoyed. The Lord Jesus, who had been awaited for so many years, had truly returned. I felt very fortunate to be able to accept God's work in the last days. I thought about how the brothers had been preaching the gospel to me for nearly a year, and how I had constantly resisted and rejected it. If it weren't for God's mercy and salvation, and the brothers' preaching the gospel to me time and again, I wouldn't have been able to come before God. For this, I felt very grateful to God. But then I remembered how I hadn't sought or investigated God's work of the last days, how I had blindly judged and condemned it, and even closed off the church and stopped the church members from seeking or investigating it. When I thought about this, I felt very guilty, and I hated myself for being too blind to know God, for not having a heart that feared God, and for resisting Him. Wasn't I the same as the Pharisees who resisted the Lord Jesus? I'd thought that since I had studied theology for so many years and always served the Lord, I must have some knowledge of Him. I never thought I would "meet" the Lord in this way. At that time, I felt very uneasy, thinking of how I had committed such a great sin by resisting the Lord, and wondering how He would treat me. I fell to my knees before God and prayed to confess my sins, "Almighty God, I have been so arrogant. I did not know You, I resisted and judged Your work, and I closed off the church and restricted the church members from seeking and investigating Your work. What I did was the same as the Pharisees, and I truly deserve Your punishment. I am truly unworthy of Your salvation!" During those days, I lived in a state of regret and anxiety.

Each time I read Almighty God's words revealing people who resist and condemn Him, it felt like God was speaking about me. I felt like I had already been condemned and that God would not save me.

Later, I opened up to my brothers and sisters about my state, and they read me a passage of God's word which gave me great comfort. God says: **"Each person who has accepted being conquered by God's words will have several opportunities for salvation; in God's salvation of each of these people He will give them slack to the greatest extent possible. In other words, they will be shown the utmost leniency. As long as people turn back from the wrong path, and as long as they can repent, God will give them opportunities to obtain His salvation. When humans first rebel against God, He has no desire to put them to death; rather, He does all He can to save them. If someone really has no room for salvation, then God will cast them aside. The reason God is slow to punish certain people is that He wishes to save everyone who can be saved. He judges, enlightens, and guides people only with words, and does not use a rod to put them to death. Employing words to bring humans salvation is the purpose and significance of the final stage of work"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. You Should Put Aside the Blessings of Status and Understand God's Intention to Bring Salvation to Man). After they read God's words, one brother said, "We have been corrupted by Satan, we all have corrupt dispositions, and we have no fear of God in our hearts. When we see that God's words and work do not conform to our notions, we rebel against God and resist Him, and are likely to deny and condemn Him. But once we understand the truth, if we turn back to the right path and genuinely repent to God, He will still grant us the chance to be saved. But those who are stubborn, unrepentant, and adamantly resist God will be condemned by Him, and in the end, they will all be punished." At that



moment, I felt very touched. I thought, “I resisted God and did such great evil, yet God will still show me mercy and save me. God’s love is so great! In the future, I must preach the gospel to many people and repay God’s love. I must tell the church members the great news of the Lord’s return, so that they can hear His voice and welcome Him too.” So, after that, I started spreading the gospel to the members of the church.

One time, I testified to a church member about Almighty God’s new work and the bishop found out about it, so he called me and asked me to go see him. When I arrived at the church, I met with an abbot first, who was in his eighties. He quietly told me that the bishop was very opposed to my belief in Eastern Lightning. The abbot tried to persuade me to admit my mistake to the bishop, repent, and beg him to be lenient with me. When I heard this, I was very upset, so I prayed to God, “Almighty God, I don’t know how to face this. Please protect me, and give me faith and determination. No matter what happens next, I ask that You guide me so that I may stand firm on the true way.” After praying, I felt a bit calmer. When I saw the bishop, he asked me if I believed in Eastern Lightning, and I said yes. He became very angry and said, “I heard you were in contact with people from Eastern Lightning, but I didn’t think anything of it. I thought that as you are a priest and have received specialized theological training, you’d never accept Eastern Lightning. I cannot believe you have actually done so!” I told him, “I didn’t accept Eastern Lightning out of confusion. I’ve investigated it for more than half a year and read much of Almighty God’s word. These words are the truth, things which no human could say, and Almighty God is the Lord Jesus returned....” The bishop did not wait for me to finish speaking, and impatiently said, “It’s for the Pope to decide whether Eastern Lightning is the return of the Lord. The Pope is never wrong in matters of faith. If the Pope recognizes it, so will we. If he

doesn't and says that Eastern Lightning is heresy, then we can't believe in it!" After hearing what he said, I thought, "The Pope is also a corrupt human being. If he does not seek, he can't possibly receive the enlightenment or illumination of the Holy Spirit, or recognize the Lord's new work. You believe in the Lord, but instead of listening to His words, you blindly follow the words of the Pope—a man. How is that believing in the Lord? Isn't that purely belief in man?" I continued to testify Almighty God's work in the last days to the bishop, but he didn't listen at all. He said, "If the Pope doesn't say Eastern Lightning is the work of the Lord returned, we can't believe in it. Whether it is the true way depends on the Pope's decision!"

In the past, I had also worshiped the Pope. I thought that he was the Lord's representative, and that we had to listen to him in all things. But later, I read some of Almighty God's words that changed my views on the matter. I remember one passage that said the following: **"There are several major religions in the world, and each has its own head, or leader, and the followers are spread across different countries and regions all over the world; almost every country, be it large or small, has different religions within it. However, regardless of how many religions there are across the world, all people within the universe ultimately exist under the guidance of one God, and their existence is not guided by religious heads or leaders. This is to say that mankind is not guided by a particular religious head or leader; rather, the whole of mankind is led by the Creator, who created the heavens and earth and all things, and who also created mankind—this is a fact. Although the world has several major religions, regardless of how great they are, they all exist under the dominion of the Creator, and none of them can exceed the scope of this dominion. The development of mankind, the supersedure**

**of society, the development of natural sciences—each is inseparable from the arrangements of the Creator, and this work is not something that can be done by any given religious head. A religious head is merely the leader of a particular religion, and cannot represent God, nor can they represent the One who created the heavens and earth and all things. A religious head can lead all those within the entire religion, but they cannot command all created beings beneath the heavens—this is a universally acknowledged fact. A religious head is merely a leader, and cannot stand equal to God (the Creator). All things are in the hands of the Creator, and in the end they will all return to the hands of the Creator. Mankind was made by God, and regardless of the religion, every person will return under the dominion of God—this is inevitable. Only God is the Most High among all things, and the highest ruler among all created beings must also return under His dominion. No matter how high the status of a man, that man cannot take mankind to a suitable destination, and no one is able to class all things according to kind”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Knowing the Three Stages of God’s Work Is the Path to Knowing God). I understood from Almighty God’s words that the Pope is just a leader, a created being, and he cannot represent God. God is the Creator. He created the heavens and earth and all things, as well as human beings, and led humankind to the present day. God governs the destiny of humankind, and only God can express the truth to save people and lead us to a beautiful destination. This work cannot be done by any created being, nor by any religious leader. Though popes hold a high status, they are also corrupt human beings. They cannot express the truth, let alone do the work of saving humankind, so no matter how high their status, they cannot represent God. If they do not seek when God does His new work, they will not be enlightened or illuminated by the Holy Spirit, and

ultimately, they will be abandoned and eliminated by God. They are just like the chief priests and Pharisees in ancient times—they held high status, but when the Lord Jesus came to work, they did not seek at all. They resisted and condemned the Lord Jesus, and were cursed and punished by God.

After that, the bishop ordered me not to have any more contact with the people from Eastern Lightning. I didn't agree, so he became very angry and said, "Then consider your duties as abbot suspended. Hand over the monastery ledgers and go to the basement and reflect on what you've done." I was a little surprised at the time, I didn't expect them to dismiss me so quickly. I felt a little lost. I thought about how in the several years I had been an abbot, no matter where I went, the priests and monks would all gather around me, listening to my words and doing whatever I said. Now the bishop had removed me from my post, I knew that the priests and monks would not respect me that way anymore. I also thought of how much work I had done to get to my position as an abbot and priest. As soon as I made the decision to follow Almighty God, I could not possibly continue being an abbot and priest. Although I was already certain about the work of Almighty God in the last days, I still didn't have the courage to completely cut myself off from Catholicism. I thought, "This choice is no trivial matter. I have to think carefully before I make my decision." I went to the basement and saw Priest Zhao, who had been placed there to reflect on his fornication. I told him that I was sent there because I had accepted the work of Almighty God in the last days. He was very surprised and said that he had only committed the sin of fornication in a moment of weakness, so if he confessed to the Lord, he could still be saved. He said that my problem was more serious, that it was a question of faith, and that as soon as we misplace

our faith, we can no longer be saved and enter the kingdom of heaven. At the time, I was not affected by his words.

After two or three days, Priest Wang and the bookkeeper came to the basement to verify the ledgers with me. Priest Wang looked at me with disdain, and when he asked about the ledgers, it was like he was interrogating a prisoner. It all felt so upsetting. After they left, I lay weakly in bed, feeling miserable and wronged. I thought of how everyone was always very deferential to me when I ran the monastery. No matter where I was being hosted, the priests and monks happily came out to greet me, and the host would serve fruit and show me warm hospitality. The priests and monks always looked forward to my sermons, and they usually waited for me to make a decision when discussing anything. I also often arranged the work of the priests and monks, and they all listened to and obeyed me. But now, after I had been made to step down from my position, they all looked down on me. The priests no longer respected me, and everyone was ignoring me while I was in the basement. It was such a huge contrast from how things were when I was an abbot! Not having status really does change things. I then thought that if I chose to follow Almighty God in the future, I would never be able to enjoy the life of an abbot again, and the status and treatment I had received would disappear. That made me feel disappointed. But then I thought, “Almighty God is indeed the returned Lord Jesus. If I don’t follow Almighty God just for the sake of my status and enjoyment, am I truly a believer in God? Can I still be saved by God?” I didn’t know which path I should choose. I felt very tormented, and fell to my knees and prayed to God, asking Him to enlighten and guide me so that I would no longer be constrained by the bonds of status and reputation, and be able to follow God’s footsteps. After praying, I remembered a passage of Almighty God’s word that my brothers and sisters had read to me: “**God has**

**humbled Himself to such a level that He does His work in these filthy and corrupt people, and perfects this group of people. God not only became flesh to live and eat among people, to shepherd people, and to provide what people need. More important is that He does His mighty work of salvation and conquest upon these unbearably corrupt people. He came to the heart of the great red dragon to save these most corrupt of people, so that all people may be changed and made new. The immense hardship that God endures is not only the hardship that the God incarnate endures, but most of all it is that God's Spirit suffers extreme humiliation—He humbles and hides Himself so much that He becomes an ordinary person. God was incarnated and took the form of flesh so that people see that He has a normal human life and normal human needs. This is enough to prove that God has humbled Himself to a great extent. The Spirit of God is realized in the flesh. His Spirit is so high and great, yet He takes the form of a common human, of a negligible human, so as to do the work of His Spirit. The caliber, insight, sense, humanity, and lives of each of you show that you are really unworthy to accept God's work of this kind. You are really unworthy to let God endure such hardship for your sake. God is so great. He is so supreme, and people are so lowly, yet He still works upon them. He not only was incarnated to provide for people, to speak to people, but He even lives together with people. God is so humble, so lovable”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Only Those Who Focus on Practice Can Be Perfected). It's true. No country resists God more severely than China. God came incarnate to the nation of the great red dragon to speak and work, He has suffered persecution and slander at the hands of the Communist Party, and the condemnation and rejection of the religious world. God is so supreme, and so noble, yet He has endured great

humiliation to come to earth, and everything He does is to save us. God is truly humble and lovely! But all I wanted was to enjoy the benefits of status, and I loved having the support and adoration of others. Even though I was already certain of God's work, I was still unwilling to give up my status to follow Him. Wasn't I deliberately resisting, even though I knew the true way? Wasn't I truly lacking in conscience? When I realized this, I felt a bit guilty and ashamed, and I prepared myself to let go of my position.

A few days later, my cousin came to the basement to try to persuade me and get me to reflect. He said that if I didn't, the bishop would expel me from the church. When I heard that, I was shocked. I had never heard of anyone being excommunicated from our church. If I were expelled, all the church members around me and everyone in the entire diocese would reject me. During the few days that passed after my cousin left, I couldn't stop struggling internally. From the moment that I began believing in the Lord, it never occurred to me that I could be excommunicated, and I didn't think the bishop would expel me for believing in Almighty God. I thought about these things over and over during those days. Every time I saw the prophecies in the Bible about God's work in the last days, I remembered the brothers and sisters who had testified to me about Almighty God's work and the passages of God's word I had read. These scenes flashed through my mind like a movie. Almighty God is the returned Lord Jesus, and I couldn't give up following Him. But when I thought of leaving the Catholic Church or being expelled, I was unable to make up my mind.

Later, the bishop came to the basement and asked how my reflection was going. When he saw that I was preserving in my belief in Almighty God, he was very unhappy, and said, "Your belief in Eastern Lightning is no trivial matter. You need to really reflect on yourself. If you can sincerely know yourself, repent, and reject Eastern Lightning, we can forget about



your mistake and you can remain in your position as an abbot.” After the bishop left, Priest Zhao tried to persuade me again. He said, “You need to write down the conclusions you have come to through your reflection. If you do, you can continue to be an abbot. If you don’t, the bishop won’t let you off lightly!” After hearing that, I thought, “The bishop has already given me an ultimatum, so if I don’t write out the results of my reflection, I will really lose my position as an abbot, and I will be faced with expulsion from the church.” I felt sad when I thought about that. Although I knew I should choose to follow Almighty God, I was still a little unwilling to let go of my position. In my pain, I came before God and earnestly cried out to Him, saying, “Almighty God, I face my final choice now. Please help and guide me, so that I can make the right one.” After I prayed, I thought of some of God’s words that my brothers and sisters had once read to me. God’s words say: **“God will certainly never start again elsewhere. God will accomplish this fact: He will make all people throughout the universe come before Him and worship the God on earth, and His work in other places will cease, and people will be forced to seek the true way. It will be like Joseph: Everyone came to him for food, and bowed down to him, for he had things to eat. In order to avoid famine, people will be forced to seek the true way. The entire religious community will suffer severe famine, and only the God of today is the wellspring of living water, possessed of the ever-flowing wellspring provided for the enjoyment of man, and people will come and depend on Him”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. The Millennial Kingdom Has Arrived). It is true. Churches everywhere are desolate now, and bereft of the work of the Holy Spirit. There is no illumination in the sermons of bishops and priests, they are only able to preach some theological theories and religious doctrines, and rigorously observe some religious rituals and man-made rules. But

clinging to these things does not offer the slightest provision or edification to people's lives; everyone lives in a cycle of committing sin, confessing sin, and sinning again every day. No matter how hard people try, they can't solve this problem. Even the clergy can't refrain from obvious sins like stealing offerings or fornication, like Priest Zhao, who had sunk to such depths that he wasn't ashamed at all of having committed such a great sin. Catholicism today is nothing but a stagnant pond! The Church of Almighty God is different. When we fellowship on the words of Almighty God at each gathering, it helps us to understand the truth, and gain provision and edification in our lives. If I didn't keep up with Almighty God's work and if I didn't gain the truths He is expressing in the last days, I would never break away from sin. I would be trapped in sin every day, unable to extricate myself. What would be the point of staying in religion and enjoying everyone's support then? Then I thought of some of God's words again: **"Christ is man's gateway to the kingdom during the last days, and there are none who can go around Him. None may be perfected by God except through Christ. You believe in God, and so you must accept His words and submit to His way. You cannot only think of gaining blessings while being incapable of accepting the truth and incapable of accepting the provision of life. Christ comes during the last days so that all those who truly believe in Him may be provided with life. His work is for the sake of concluding the old age and entering the new one, and His work is the path that must be taken by all those who would enter the new age. If you are incapable of acknowledging Him, and instead condemn, blaspheme, or even persecute Him, then you are bound to burn for eternity and shall never enter the kingdom of God. For this Christ is Himself the expression of the Holy Spirit, the expression of God, the One whom God has entrusted to do His work on earth. And so**

**I say that if you cannot accept all that is done by Christ of the last days, then you blaspheme the Holy Spirit. The retribution to be had by those who blaspheme the Holy Spirit is self-evident to all. I also tell you that if you resist Christ of the last days, if you spurn Christ of the last days, there will be no one else to bear the consequences on your behalf. Furthermore, from this day onward you will not have another chance to gain the approval of God; even if you try to redeem yourself, you will never again behold the face of God. For what you resist is not a man, what you spurn is not some puny being, but Christ. Do you know what the consequences of this will be? You will not have made a small mistake, but committed a heinous crime. And so I advise everyone not to bare your fangs before the truth, or make careless criticisms, for only the truth can bring you life, and nothing except the truth can allow you to be reborn and behold the face of God again”** (The Word, Vol. 1.

The Appearance and Work of God. Only Christ of the Last Days Can Give Man the Way of Eternal Life). Almighty God brings us the truth, the way, and the life. We can only be purified and saved through these truths. It was by God's grace and exaltation that I was able to accept the truths expressed by Almighty God and have a way to change my corrupt dispositions. If I chose to stay in Catholicism, coveted status and enjoyment, and rejected God's salvation in the last days, I would be condemned by God forever and completely lose my chance of salvation. I would be just like the chief priests and Pharisees. They possessed high status among the Jews, and enjoyed the good opinion and support of everyone. When the Lord Jesus came, they knew that His sermons had authority and power, but in order to protect their status and income, they refused to accept His salvation, and even nailed Him to the cross. In the end, they were all eternally cursed and punished by God. I couldn't follow in their footsteps! I could only achieve salvation and earn

God's approval by keeping up with Almighty God's new work, enjoying the watering and provision of His words, knowing myself through them, finding the root cause of my sin, and understanding how to be cleansed of corruption—wasn't that more valuable and meaningful than having high status? The more I thought about this, the brighter my heart felt. I saw completely clearly that there was nothing worth staying in religion for, and that I didn't need to remain there. So, I gave up my position as a priest and abbot and resolutely left Catholicism.

Although I suffered some hardship during those few days I spent in the basement, the guidance and leadership of God's words made me understand that I shouldn't be pursuing status, and that it is not something that God approves of. The road ahead was clear. In the past, I thought that understanding Bible knowledge and theological theories meant that I knew God. I didn't realize the theological theories I had learned were all notions and imaginings about God, and that they don't accord with the truth at all. They were like strong walls that had been built all around me, causing me to reach my own verdicts about God and resist His work. They also made me become increasingly arrogant, self-righteous, and obstinate. I didn't have a humble, seeking, or fearful heart toward God. If it weren't for Almighty God's mercy, it would be impossible for me to attain His salvation! Moreover, when I was coveting status and enjoyment and didn't know what decision to make, God repeatedly enlightened and guided me with His words and led me to relinquish my position and keep up with His work. If it weren't for God's care and support, I could never have returned before Him. God's love is so practical and real!

## 2. The Path to God's Kingdom Isn't Always Smooth

By Senen, India

I was born in a Christian family, and from a young age I followed my parents in believing in the Lord. I also often went to church gatherings and participated in various church activities. One day in March of 2020, I met a sister on Facebook. We talked about belief in the Lord, and I felt the things this sister talked about were very novel. For example, she asked me if I knew the criteria for entering the kingdom of heaven, and this topic instantly piqued my curiosity. I thought, "I have believed in the Lord for so long, but the pastors and elders have never discussed the criteria for entering the kingdom of heaven. I have also never thought if we can truly enter the kingdom of heaven by believing as we do." This was the first time I had heard about this topic, and I was curious to know the answer. Later, by attending gatherings and reading the words of Almighty God, I understood after being corrupted by Satan, we have sinful natures within us, and that we often sin. If we don't remove this sinful nature, we can't escape from sin. Those who are filthy and corrupt in this way aren't qualified to enter the kingdom of heaven, because God is righteous and holy, and people can't see God without being holy. She also told me, "The Lord Jesus has returned as Almighty God, to express the many truths, and to do the work of judging and purifying people. He does this to remove our sinful natures and completely save us from sin. Only by accepting God's work of judgment in the last days and being purified of our corruption are we qualified to enter the kingdom of heaven." She also read Almighty God's words to me: **"You only know that Jesus shall descend during the last days, but how exactly will He descend? A sinner such as you, who has just been**

redeemed, and has not been changed, or been perfected by God, can you be in line with God's intentions? For you, you who are still of your old self, it is true that you were saved by Jesus, and that you are not counted as a sinner because of the salvation of God, but this does not prove that you are not sinful, and are not impure. How can you be saintly if you have not been changed? Within, you are beset by impurity, selfish and mean, yet you still wish to descend with Jesus—you should be so lucky! You have missed a step in your belief in God: You have merely been redeemed, but you have not been changed. For you to be in line with God's intentions, God must personally do the work of changing and cleansing you; if you are only redeemed, you will be incapable of attaining sanctity. In this way you will be unqualified to share in the good blessings of God, for you have missed out a step in God's work of managing man, which is the key step of changing and perfecting. You, a sinner who has just been redeemed, are therefore incapable of directly inheriting God's inheritance" (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Concerning Appellations and Identity). **"Though Jesus did much work among man, He only completed the redemption of all mankind and became man's sin offering; He did not rid man of all his corrupt disposition. Fully saving man from the influence of Satan not only required Jesus to become the sin offering and bear the sins of man, but it also required God to do even greater work to rid man completely of his satanically corrupted disposition. And so, now that man has been forgiven of his sins, God has returned to the flesh to lead man into the new age, and begun the work of chastisement and judgment. This work has brought man into a higher realm. All those who submit under His dominion shall enjoy higher truth and receive greater blessings. They shall truly live in the light, and they shall gain the truth, the way, and**

**the life”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Preface). The sister also fellowshiped with me about her understanding of God’s words. After listening to this, I thought about the deeds and conduct of myself and my brothers and sisters. I had to admit that in our belief in the Lord, our sins had been absolved, that we enjoyed the abundant grace of the Lord, that we did some good deeds, that we were kind, and that we didn’t hit or scold others, but we could still often tell lies and commit sins, we were arrogant and looked down on others, we vied with others for name and gain, and we still envied and hated others. We all lived trapped in a cycle of sinning and confessing, and we constantly struggled with sin. Only after reading the words of Almighty God, did I understand that this was because the sinful natures in us had not been removed. From Almighty God’s words, I also found the way to escape from sin and be saved by God. That is, we must accept Almighty God’s work of judgment in the last days. Only once our corrupt dispositions have been cleansed are we qualified to enter God’s kingdom. I thought Almighty God’s words were very good and practical. His words brightened my heart and made me understand some truths I had never heard before. After that, I diligently read Almighty God’s words, actively attended online gatherings, fellowshiped with the brothers and sisters on the knowledge and understanding of God’s word, and every time we met, I found it very rewarding and enjoyable. After a period of time, I knew many truths and mysteries that I hadn’t previously known in my belief in the Lord and reading of the Bible, such as what the incarnation is, how to discern the true Christ from false ones, the mystery of God’s name, the purpose of God’s management plan, how Satan corrupts mankind, how God works step by step to save humankind, how God’s kingdom is realized on earth, and so on. In Almighty God’s words, I also gained answers to many of the things in the Bible that had confused me before. I realized these



truths and mysteries could only be revealed by God Himself and that no human could have the power to open up these mysteries. I therefore determined that Almighty God's word is the truth and the voice of God, and that Almighty God is the returned Lord Jesus! I was very excited. I told many friends the good news of the Lord's return, and told them to also look into the work of Almighty God in the last days.

But not long after, the church I belonged to—the Baptist Church in Northeast India—began to spread documents among the believers that were fabricated by religious pastors to condemn The Church of Almighty God. These documents were full of the CCP's slander and smears of the Church, and they forbade followers from attending gatherings of the Church. The content was also broadcast on major TV stations in India. As soon as you turned on the TV or computer and watched the news, you could see this kind of negative propaganda. It soon spread to the whole country. Seeing these pastors and leaders of the religious world blatantly distorting the facts, spreading rumors and fallacies to slander and condemn Almighty God made me very angry and very sad. At that time, many of those who investigated God's work of the last days with me withdrew from the gathering groups because they were misled. Some even tried to dissuade me, saying, "This is a church condemned by the CCP, and shouldn't be believed." I was disappointed to see them give up the true way and felt sorry for them. The CCP is an atheist regime. It doesn't believe in God at all, and it constantly persecutes religious beliefs. Why did these people prefer to believe in the CCP, an atheist political party, instead of listening to God's voice or investigating God's work? How could they be so foolish? Just at that moment, a friend of mine in my hometown saw my WhatsApp feed saying, "The Lord has returned, and the kingdom of Christ has come to earth," and he asked me if I had attended gatherings of The Church of Almighty God. I

said, “Yes.” He told me I shouldn’t believe in it. He also sent me slanderous remarks and fallacies about The Church of Almighty God, and said, “The pastor warned us not to follow Almighty God. The Lord’s return in the last days couldn’t possibly be as incarnate flesh, so we can’t attend gatherings of The Church of Almighty God.” I was unshaken by his words because by that time, the brothers and sisters of The Church of Almighty God had fellowshiped the truth of the incarnation with me, that the Lord would return in the last days as incarnate flesh, which was planned by God long ago, and is proved by the prophecies of the Lord Jesus. The Lord Jesus said: **“As the lightning comes out of the east, and shines even to the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be”** (Matthew 24:27). **“For as the lightning, that lightens out of the one part under heaven, shines to the other part under heaven; so shall also the Son of man be in His day. But first must He suffer many things, and be rejected of this generation”** (Luke 17:24–25). **“Therefore be you also ready: for in such an hour as you think not the Son of man comes”** (Matthew 24:44). When the Lord Jesus prophesied His return in the last days, He mentioned many times **“the coming of the Son of man,” “the Son of man comes,”** and **“the Son of man be in His day.”** Here, **“the Son of man”** refers to the incarnate flesh. Almighty God has come in the last days and has expressed many truths. He is the coming of the Son of man, the appearance of the Savior, which fulfills the prophecies of the Lord Jesus. I also knew that only God is the truth, the way, and the life. If a person can express the truth and the word of God, and can do the work of judgment and purification in the last days, then this person must be God incarnate. No matter how ordinary His appearance, or whether He has status or power, His words and work are the most important things. This is the best way to prove His identity and status. I told my friend what I understood and said to him, “God is the Lord of

Creation, God can do whatever He wants. What we humans should do is seek, not judge and delineate God. The gatherings of The Church of Almighty God are highly beneficial to me, and help me understand many truths, so I won't stop going to them. When we believe in God, we should listen to God's voice, not blindly listen to people. The Bible says: 'We ought to obey God rather than men' (Acts 5:29)." My friend then said to me very seriously, "If you continue to believe in Almighty God, when you return to your hometown, the Supreme Council will question you. The pastor won't let you believe in this, and the villagers will reject you. Have you thought about these things?" I said, "Being rejected by people isn't frightening. What's scary is failing to keep up with God's footsteps and being forsaken by God. Have you considered that if Almighty God truly is the return of the Lord Jesus, and we don't accept it, we will fall into the disaster, and be left weeping and gnashing our teeth? The Lord's return is a major matter, so why don't you seek and look into this?" But he still refused my advice.

Later, my friend told my parents about my belief in Almighty God. For a whole week after that, my parents called and berated me every day, saying, "The pastor keeps telling us to stop you going to the gatherings of The Church of Almighty God. You have to stop going to those gatherings and leave that Church!" I told them, "The Church of Almighty God is not like what the pastor says. Attending their gatherings has allowed me to understand many truths I didn't understand before. This is the true way, and I have not gone astray." I wanted to testify Almighty God's work in the last days to them, but they were so misled by the rumors that they didn't let me say more. Later, because of the epidemic, I returned home from school. When my parents saw that I often attended gatherings of The Church of Almighty God online, they tried to restrict me. The neighbors also talked

about me, saying that I had gone crazy for believing in Almighty God and ignoring the pastor. My parents were even angrier when they heard these things. They scolded me when they came home, “Do you know what the villagers say about you? Will you disregard what we tell you and still go to those gatherings?” I said, “Yes, I will still attend the gatherings.” My parents were very angry, and tried even harder to stop me. They often interrupted me during gatherings, making it difficult to attend in peace. Once, I was praying after a gathering, and when I opened my eyes, I suddenly saw my father standing next to me, staring at me, which shocked me and set my heart racing. Then he shouted angrily, “Cut off the internet and leave your gathering group right now!” I told my parents, “The Lord Jesus has really returned as Almighty God and is already performing new work. If we don’t keep up with God’s footsteps and accept God’s work of judgment in the last days, we can’t escape from sin, or be saved and enter God’s kingdom, and in the end, we will fall into disaster and be punished.” But they didn’t listen to what I said at all and repeated the rumors and fallacies preached by the pastor. They said it’s impossible that God has incarnated as a woman. I thought, “How can I fellowship with them?” Then I thought of a passage of Almighty God’s word the brothers and sisters from The Church of Almighty God had read to me: **“Each stage of work done by God has its own practical significance. Back then, when Jesus came, He came in male form, and when God comes this time, His form is female. From this, you can see that God’s creation of both men and women can be of use in His work, and with Him there is no distinction of gender. When His Spirit comes, He can take on any flesh He pleases, and that flesh can represent Him; whether male or female, it can represent God as long as it is His incarnate flesh. If Jesus had appeared as a female when He came, in other words, if an infant girl, and not a**

**boy, had been conceived by the Holy Spirit, that stage of work would have been completed all the same. If that had been the case, then the present stage of work would have to be completed by a male instead, but the work would be completed all the same. The work done in each stage has its significance; neither stage of work is repeated, nor does it conflict with the other”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. The Two Incarnations Complete the Significance of the Incarnation). I remember they fellowshiped that God’s incarnation is when God’s Spirit wears flesh and becomes a regular Son of man, so no matter if this person is male or female, He is God Himself, and He can express the truth and do God’s work. The Lord Jesus was male. He was crucified for humankind and bore people’s sins, thereby completing the work of redeeming humankind. In the last days, God comes incarnate as female, and on the foundation of the Lord Jesus’ work, expresses all truth required to save mankind, and performs the work of judging and purifying people. Therefore, whether the incarnate God is male or female, He can express the truth and do the work of redeeming and saving humankind. If God had incarnated both times as a male, people would delimit God, thinking that He could only incarnate as a male, not as a female. Then wouldn’t women face even more discrimination and bias? God is a righteous God. He created both men and women. The first time God incarnated as a male, and in the last days He has become flesh again, as a female, meaning He’s fair to both men and women. If God had incarnated as a male both times, that would be unfair to women, so God became flesh as a female in the last days. That shows God’s righteousness, and it shows that God created man and woman, and men and women are equal before God. It’s really meaningful! Thinking of this, I said to my parents, “God created male and female in His own image, so the incarnate God can naturally be male or female. His physical appearance doesn’t

matter. What matters is that since He can express the truth to save humankind, then He is the incarnation of God's Spirit, God Himself." My parents couldn't refute my words, so they said, "You say Almighty God is the returned Lord Jesus, but we don't believe this. We will accept it when the pastors and elders accept it. The pastor says Almighty God is an ordinary person born into an ordinary family, so this can't be the incarnation of God." In response to this, I told them, "When the Lord Jesus came to work, the chief priests, scribes, and Pharisees of Judaism did not recognize Him as God because of the ordinary birth and appearance. They denied the Lord Jesus, saying, 'Isn't this the carpenter's son? Isn't His mother's name Mary?' These Pharisees only looked at the appearance of the Lord Jesus. They did not investigate whether His words and work came from God. They judged with their arrogant dispositions that He was an ordinary man and not God. They also fabricated rumors, slandered, and condemned the Lord Jesus. The believers of Judaism worshiped and obeyed them, and so followed them in crucifying the Lord. In the end, they lost God's salvation and were punished. It's the same today. These pastors and elders don't investigate whether the words expressed by Almighty God are the truth and the voice of God. They just blindly judge and condemn Almighty God, saying that Almighty God is an ordinary person, and questioning His origin and family background. Isn't this the same as when the Pharisees condemned the Lord Jesus?" I remembered a passage of God's words my brothers and sisters had read to me: **"He who is God incarnate shall possess the essence of God, and He who is God incarnate shall possess the expression of God. Since God becomes flesh, He shall bring forth the work He intends to do, and since God becomes flesh, He shall express what He is, and shall be able to bring the truth to man, bestow life upon him, and point the way for him. Flesh that**

**does not have the essence of God is decidedly not the incarnate God; of this there is no doubt. If man intends to inquire into whether it is God's incarnate flesh, then he must corroborate this from the disposition He expresses and the words He speaks. Which is to say, to corroborate whether or not it is God's incarnate flesh, and whether or not it is the true way, one must discriminate on the basis of His essence. And so, in determining whether it is the flesh of God incarnate, the key lies in His essence (His work, His utterances, His disposition, and many other aspects), rather than external appearance. If man scrutinizes only His external appearance, and as a result overlooks His essence, this shows that man is benighted and ignorant"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Preface). I said to my parents, "Our determination of whether the flesh of Almighty God is God's incarnate flesh should be based on whether He can express the truth and do the work of saving humankind, not on whether His appearance is ordinary. Think about it, do we believe in the Lord Jesus because of His image in the flesh? No. We believed the Lord Jesus to be Christ incarnate because we read His words in the Bible, and saw that His words have authority, and He can redeem mankind, absolve man's sins, and because we enjoyed a lot of the Lord's grace. I believe in Almighty God today because I saw that the words expressed by Almighty God are the truth. They have authority and power, and are the voice of God. Only then did I believe that He is the incarnate God, the returned Lord Jesus. You should also read the words of Almighty God. Don't blindly listen to the pastors' words and believe what the pastors say! If they take the wrong path, resist God, and condemn God, will you follow them in resisting and condemning God?" When my parents heard me say this, they were very angry. They scolded me, saying, "If you dare to oppose the pastors and elders, you will be driven out by the villagers. You're not even an adult yet,

where would you go? We won't be able to help you if that happens! Stop talking about these things, and don't testify Almighty God to others. When the pastors and elders accept it, we will accept it. For now, don't make trouble for yourself." No matter how I fellowshiped with them, they wouldn't listen at all, and they rebuked me harshly. They said, "We spent so much money on your schooling, on your food and clothes, but you are so disobedient. You're a disappointment to us." At the time, my two brothers were also on my parents' side. No one in my family listened to my advice. I tried to tell them that Almighty God has expressed many truths, and tried to share what I have gained with them, but no matter what I said, they still wouldn't listen. My parents and the villagers had treated me very well in the past, but now, just because I believed in Almighty God, their attitudes toward me had changed. I had become a villain in their eyes and an outcast. Even at home, I couldn't feel my family's concern for me. I felt lonely and miserable. But I knew I couldn't give up attending gatherings no matter what, because I knew that if I didn't attend the gatherings and equip myself with the truth, it would be impossible to withstand such an environment. Later, in order to avoid unnecessary conflicts, I had to hide from them and go to gatherings in secret. I couldn't talk and fellowship. I could only communicate silently with my brothers and sisters in text.

One night, the pastor and a co-worker of his suddenly came to my house. The neighbors and some villagers also came to watch. The pastor asked me, "What do you talk about at the gatherings of The Church of Almighty God?" I said, "The Church of Almighty God testifies that the Lord Jesus has returned, and is the incarnate Almighty God who does the work of judgment in the last days. We also fellowship on what kind of people can enter the kingdom of heaven, how to pursue to gain salvation, and other issues." The pastor then asked in a scornful tone, "Then tell me



what kind of people can enter the kingdom of heaven.” I answered him, “The Bible says: **‘Not every one that said to Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that follows the will of My Father which is in heaven’** (Matthew 7:21). **‘You shall therefore be holy, for I am holy’** (Leviticus 11:45). From these verses, we can see if we want to enter the kingdom of heaven, we must escape from sin and be cleansed of our corrupt dispositions, and become people who follow the will of God. We currently all still live in sin. We often lie and sin, and we fail to practice God’s words, so we can’t enter God’s kingdom. I used to be confused about why we are trapped in a constant cycle of sinning, confessing, and sinning again. Why can’t we escape the bondage of sin? Only after reading Almighty God’s words did I understand that when we believe in the Lord, our sins are absolved, but our sinful nature, the root of our sin, has not been eliminated, so we still cannot help but keep lying and sinning. The Bible says: **‘Without holiness no man shall see the Lord’** (Hebrews 12:14). The Lord is holy, so if we still sin and resist God, we cannot enter God’s kingdom. Now the Lord Jesus has returned to do the work of judgment in the last days. He expresses all the truths that purify and save mankind, fulfilling the prophecy of the Lord Jesus: **‘I have yet many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. However, when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth’** (John 16:12–13). Almighty God has expressed many truths. Not only does He reveal the mystery of God’s management plan, He also reveals the root cause of mankind’s sin, judges and reveals people’s satanic nature and corrupt disposition, such as arrogance, deceit, evil, and so on. He also reveals the various adulterations in our belief in God and our wrong intentions and views, such as believing in God only to enter the kingdom of heaven. The brothers and sisters in The Church of Almighty God experience the judgment and chastisement of God’s words, gradually

realize the truth of their own satanic natures and corruption, produce genuine repentance, and are finally able to escape the bonds of sin and purify their corrupt dispositions. This is the effect achieved by God's word in the Age of Kingdom. If we want to enter the kingdom of heaven, we must accept Almighty God's work of judgment in the last days, and only after our corruption is cleansed are we qualified to enter God's kingdom." After I finished, the pastor said, "I know you long for the truth, but you are still too young. You do not have much understanding of the Bible, so you are easily misled. Right now you need to stop following Almighty God, confess your sins to the Lord, repent, and stop attending their gatherings!" The pastor saw that I was ignoring him and said, "You are my sheep. How dare you not obey me? You must repent right now, withdraw from The Church of Almighty God, and stop praying in the name of Almighty God." I told him insistently, "I will never stop following Almighty God." He was very angry, and warned me, "The Supreme Council of the church appointed me to 'look after' you. If you persist in your belief in Almighty God, you will be taken before the Supreme Council for questioning. You should know, once this happens, not only will your studies be affected, you will also have a bad reputation in the church. You might not even be able to find a job in the future. Why go through the trouble?" Hearing the pastor say this, I felt a lot of pressure, because I knew that once I was questioned by the Supreme Council of the church, they would never leave me alone. If I didn't stop following Almighty God, when I needed a certificate issued in the future, the village head wouldn't sign it for me, and I might not even be able to find a job. My parents sent me to college so that I could find a good job after graduating. If I couldn't find a job, my parents would definitely hinder me even more from believing in Almighty God. Besides, I had just started believing in Almighty God, and I still understood little of the truth.

If I were brought in by them for questioning, and faced with a group of people attacking me, could I withstand it? If I insisted on believing in Almighty God, would they expel me from school? Would they ask all the other believers to reject me? Thinking of this, I was very worried, so I silently prayed to God, asking Him to lead me, and saying I wished to stand firm in testimony for Him. After I prayed, I thought of Almighty God's word: **"You must be awake and waiting at all times, and you must pray before Me more. You must recognize the various plots and cunning schemes of Satan, recognize the spirits, know people, and be able to discern all kinds of people, events, and things"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Utterances of Christ in the Beginning, Chapter 17). **"Satan is ever present devouring the knowledge of Me in people's hearts, gnashing its teeth and flexing its claws in its final death throes. Do you wish to fall prey to its cunning schemes at this time? Do you wish to ruin your life at the time when My work is finally completed?"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. God's Words to the Entire Universe, Chapter 6). I understood from God's word that these things happening to me were Satan's tricks. Satan used people around me to disturb and hinder me from following God. Although my stature was small and I knew little truth, I was willing to rely on God to stand firm and humiliate Satan. So, I told the pastor, "I will not stop attending gatherings. I will continue to follow Almighty God." My parents were very angry when I didn't listen to the pastor. My dad glared at me and shouted, "How dare you say 'no'? Before the pastor leaves, you need to swear you'll stop believing in Almighty God!" The pastor also threatened me, saying if I didn't stop attending gatherings within a week, he would have to take me to the Supreme Council for questioning. However, I felt no regret, because I knew very well that my choice was right. Before I accepted the work of Almighty God in the last

days, I believed in God, but I didn't understand the requirements to enter the kingdom of heaven. Sometimes, my mind was full of fantasies, and sometimes, because I often sinned and didn't know if I could enter the kingdom, I was confused. Now, I finally understood. Only the words of Almighty God allowed me to see this evil world clearly, and to understand how Satan corrupts mankind. If I hadn't read the words of Almighty God, I wouldn't have known at all how to escape the bonds of sin or how to escape from Satan's corruption. So, no matter how they hindered me, I would never give up following Almighty God. The pastor saw that I had no intention of giving up, so he left angrily.

My parents were also very angry that I rejected the pastor, and they told me furiously, "You dared to deny the pastor and do something forbidden by the church. By custom, you must be expelled from the village. If the villagers reject you, when you need a certificate issued in the future, the village head will not sign it for you. You won't be able to find a job either. Have you thought about these consequences? Where will you go then? You are just a student. You have no place to stay, and you won't be able to work. How will you survive?" My father also said he felt ashamed to have a son like me. He said I brought them great shame, and that I wouldn't be his son in the future. In all my life, it was the first time I heard my father scold me like this. He even said heartlessly that I was no longer his son. I couldn't believe my parents would say such things. I was so sad that I didn't say anything. My father went on to say, "I'll tell you again, if you continue to believe in Almighty God, you'd better pay me back all the money I spent on raising you!" When my father said that in front of the villagers, I was very humiliated and very sad. My parents had treated me well in the past. Among their ten children, my parents liked me best and had the highest expectations of me. They had never said something so

ruthless to me, but now their attitude had completely changed. I missed my parents' kindness to me, and I didn't want to be in trouble with them. I felt very weak, and I didn't know what to do, so I prayed to God, asking Him to lead me in facing this environment. Later, I thought of a passage of God's words: **"You must suffer hardship for the truth, you must give yourself to the truth, you must endure humiliation for the truth, and to gain more of the truth you must undergo more suffering. This is what you should do. You must not throw away the truth for the sake of a peaceful family life, and you must not lose your life's dignity and integrity for the sake of momentary enjoyment. You should pursue all that is beautiful and good, and you should pursue a path in life that is more meaningful. If you lead such a vulgar life, and do not pursue any objectives, do you not waste your life? What can you gain from such a life? You should forsake all enjoyments of the flesh for the sake of one truth, and should not throw away all truths for the sake of a little enjoyment. People like this have no integrity or dignity; there is no meaning to their existence!"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. The Experiences of Peter: His Knowledge of Chastisement and Judgment). God's word inspired me. I understood that I should suffer to gain the truth. Although my family opposed me, the pastor hindered me, and the villagers judged me, and I felt tormented and a little weak, no matter what they said, I couldn't give up following Almighty God. By reading Almighty God's words and listening to the fellowship of the brothers and sisters in gatherings, I understood many truths and mysteries, and had already confirmed in my heart that Almighty God is the Lord Jesus who has returned, Christ of the last days, so I couldn't stop going to gatherings. I knew that if I stopped attending gatherings, things would calm down. My family would no longer oppose me and would treat me as well as they did before, and no one would laugh

at me anymore, but I would lose the chance to gain the truth and be saved by God. I told myself I couldn't give up the truth, and I couldn't betray God because of my family's disapproval. Almighty God's words are the truth. Only Almighty God can tell us how Satan corrupts humankind, and only He has pointed out the way for us to escape from sin and be saved by God. That I was able to suffer today to gain the truth was worth it. So, I resolved to not suffer the constraints of my family. Even if they no longer paid my tuition, even if I was kicked out of the village and life became difficult, I wouldn't give up believing in God and pursuing the truth.

For the next week, the pastor arranged for two co-workers to come to our house every night. They repeated the same words every day to make me stop attending gatherings. No matter what they said, I continued going to gatherings. In those days, I often prayed to God, asking Him to quiet my heart and keep me from these disturbances. Later, my uncle was afraid my family would be ridiculed if the matter became too widely known, so he went to the pastor to discuss a new strategy. They took me to a theologian who was a doctor of theology and was very familiar with the Bible. After we met, the theologian questioned me, "Why do you believe in Almighty God? Do you realize that Almighty God is just an ordinary person? Why should you believe in a person?" I retorted, "Almighty God is God incarnate. He appears to be an ordinary person, but He has God's Spirit within Him, and He is the incarnation of God's Spirit. He not only has normal humanity, but also complete divinity. Just like the Lord Jesus; in appearance He was an ordinary man, but He was actually the incarnate Son of man, God Himself. He could express the truth and do the work of redeeming and saving mankind. Almighty God has come in the last days and has expressed many truths. He has revealed various mysteries of truth, such as God's six-thousand-year management plan, the mystery of the

incarnation, and how God does the work of judgment in the last days to purify and save people. He has also revealed the root cause of why mankind sins. If He were an ordinary person, would He be able to express so many truths? God is the Lord of Creation, He is the source of truth, only God can express truths, no famous person or great man in the world can express truths! Only God Himself can express these truths. No one but God can do it. All the truths expressed by Almighty God are enough to prove that He is God incarnate, God Himself.” As soon as I said these things, the doctor of theology interrupted me and said, “You are wrong to say that. All of God’s words are in the Bible, and there can be no new words outside the Bible. The words of Almighty God simply can’t be the new words of God.” I refuted him by saying, “Do you have any biblical basis for this? Is there proof in the Lord Jesus’ word? The Lord Jesus said: **‘I have yet many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. However, when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth’** (John 16:12–13). The Bible prophesies that the Lamb will open the scroll in the last days. These all show that God will speak when He returns in the last days. If, as you say, God speaks no new words outside the Bible, isn’t that denying all the words and work of the Lord’s return?” Wearing an impatient expression, he didn’t listen at all. He said some things to condemn Almighty God and repeatedly asked me to stop listening to the sermons of Eastern Lightning. Then he started showing off how lofty his theology degree was, how much he suffered to preach for the Lord, and so on. He said that I was still too young to understand the Bible and should listen to him, and he told me to stop gathering with people from The Church of Almighty God. My uncle joined in and said: “We shouldn’t believe in what the religious circles condemn. This theologian is well known for his biblical knowledge, and you are lucky to have the chance to speak to him. I hope you will listen to

him and stop going to gatherings.” I told them, “I used to be confused about living in sin. I couldn’t find the reason why people can’t get rid of sin. I didn’t understand until I read the words of Almighty God that it’s all because of the sinful nature within us. If our sinful nature is not eliminated, we will never be free from the bondage of sin.” I also testified to them about the truth of the incarnation. After I said that, the theologian said he was inspired by what I shared. He said it was very good, and he hoped to have the chance to discuss it with me in the future, but he insisted that I shouldn’t accept Almighty God. I saw that although this theologian was familiar with the Bible, had a lot of theological knowledge, and had a good reputation, in reality he was spiritually poor and didn’t understand any truth. He was also very arrogant, was unable to accept the truth, and had no interest in seeking or investigating God’s work. Just like the Pharisees who resisted the Lord Jesus, he kept condemning the appearance and work of God in the last days. That conversation did not change my determination to follow Almighty God. On the contrary, it gave me discernment of the pastors, elders, and theologians in the religious world. I stopped looking up to and admiring them. And through attending gatherings and reading Almighty God’s word during this period, I also gained some discernment of the fallacies in the religious world. This made me even more certain that Almighty God’s word is the truth and that Almighty God is the appearance of the one true God.

During a gathering, I talked with the brothers and sisters about my recent circumstances, and they shared some of God’s words with me that gave me some discernment of the false shepherds and antichrists. The Lord Jesus said: **“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for you neither go in yourselves, neither suffer you them that are entering to go in”** (Matthew



23:13). **“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, you make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves”** (Matthew 23:15). After reading God’s words and hearing their fellowship, my heart felt much brighter. I saw that these pastors and leaders in the religious world are just like those hypocritical Pharisees. They resist and condemn Almighty God’s work of the last days and do everything to prevent people from hearing God’s voice and welcoming the Lord. They are stumbling blocks for people to enter God’s kingdom. They not only don’t enter God’s kingdom themselves, they also block others from doing so. They are truly vicious! The words of Almighty God say: **“There are those who read the Bible in grand churches and recite it all day long, yet not one among them understands the purpose of God’s work. Not one among them is able to know God; still less can any one among them accord with God’s intentions. They are all worthless, vile people, each standing on high to lecture God. They willfully oppose God even as they carry His banner. Claiming faith in God, still they eat the flesh and drink the blood of man. All such people are devils that devour the soul of man, head demons that deliberately disturb those trying to step onto the right path, and stumbling blocks impeding those who seek God. They may appear of ‘sound constitution,’ but how are their followers to know that they are none other than antichrists who lead people to stand against God? How are their followers to know that they are living devils dedicated to the devouring of human souls?”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. All People Who Do Not Know God Are People Who Oppose God). **“Look at the leaders of each religion and each denomination—they are all arrogant and self-righteous, and their interpretations of the Bible lack context and are guided by their own notions and imaginings. They**

**all rely on gifts and knowledge to do their work. If they could not preach at all, would people follow them? They do, after all, possess some knowledge and can preach some doctrines, or they know how to win others over and make use of some tricks. They use these things to deceive people, and to bring people before themselves. Nominally, those people believe in God, but in reality, they follow these leaders. When they encounter someone preaching the true way, some of them say, ‘We have to consult our leader about matters of faith.’ See how people need the agreement and approval of others when it comes to believing in God and accepting the true way—is this not a problem? What have those leaders become, then? Have they not become Pharisees, false shepherds, antichrists, and stumbling blocks to people’s acceptance of the true way? Such people are of the same kind as Paul”** (The Word, Vol. 3.

The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Part Three). God clearly reveals religious leaders’ essence of hating the truth and resisting God. Almighty God has appeared and expressed so much truth, but they don’t seek at all. Instead of listening to God’s voice, they listen to the rumors of the CCP, the atheist party, condemn the appearance and work of Almighty God, and spread falsities to mislead believers and stop us from hearing the Lord’s voice and welcoming Him. It’s ruining our chance to be saved and enter the kingdom of heaven! Although these pastors and leaders often explain the Bible to people in the church, they don’t have the slightest knowledge of God and His work. They also have no God-fearing hearts. Their nature essence is the same as that of the Pharisees. They are all antichrists who hate the truth and resist God. Then I remembered how the believers in Judaism blindly worshiped religious leaders, and followed the Pharisees in resisting the Lord Jesus, and as a result, lost God’s salvation. My parents also worshiped the pastors and elders. Although they believed in the Lord for many years,

they had no place for God in their hearts. They didn't understand the truth and lacked discernment. They thought those who obeyed pastors and elders were submitting to and following the Lord. No matter what the pastors and elders said, my parents listened. In a matter as important as welcoming the Lord, they lacked all discernment and blindly listened to the pastor, yet when I testified to them about Almighty God's words, they didn't listen at all, and repeated the words of the pastor and the doctor of theology to condemn Almighty God. They even said, "Even if this is the true way, we won't accept it unless the pastors and elders do." I saw my parents were very pitiable. How were they believing in the Lord? Weren't they just believing in the pastors and elders? I told my parents, "If you were born in the Age of Grace, when the Lord Jesus appeared to work, you would be the same as those believers in Judaism in the past and follow the Pharisees in resisting and condemning the Lord Jesus, because you only listen to the pastors and elders. If the pastors and elders condemn something as false, you say the same, but you yourselves don't investigate the true way at all, nor do you seek to hear God's voice. Isn't this the same as those who followed the Pharisees and resisted the Lord Jesus? Can you get good results by believing in the Lord like this?" Over the course of the events of those days, I had a little discernment of my parents, and I no longer felt constrained and made up my mind to stand firm in witness for God.

During that time, no matter what I did, my parents watched me. I couldn't attend gatherings at home in peace. At the time, I had to sneak into a small patch of forest near the edge of the village at night for gatherings. There were a lot of mosquitoes and insects. I was badly bitten by mosquitoes, and couldn't find a comfortable place to sit. Sometimes, I was still in the woods late at night. To prevent my parents from finding out I was out at gatherings, I had to sneak back into the house to sleep, and I had to

wake up in the early morning before them to make them think I had slept well at night. During the day, I had to help my parents in the fields. After a while, I got tired and sleepy. It was utterly exhausting. I began to feel a little weak, and I didn't know when these days would end. Sometimes I even thought that if I listened to my parents and stopped going to gatherings, I wouldn't suffer so much, the villagers wouldn't laugh at me, and it wouldn't impact my search for a job. Thinking of these things, I was a little shaken. But then I thought that at every gathering, I could understand some truths, and these were truths I had never heard before. I was reluctant to give that up. During that time, there was a hymn of God's word that gave me great encouragement. It was titled **"What God Makes Perfect Is Faith,"** and I listened to it many times. It says: **"The utmost faith and love are required from us in the work of the last days. We may stumble from the slightest carelessness, for this stage of work is different from all the previous ones: What God is perfecting is mankind's faith, which is both invisible and intangible. What God does is convert words to faith, to love, and to life. People must reach a point where they have endured hundreds of refinements and possess faith greater than Job's. They must endure incredible suffering and all manner of torture without ever leaving God. When they are submissive unto death, and have great faith in God, then this stage of God's work is complete"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. The Path ... (8)). I understood from this song that I can become weak and miserable in times of trouble, but in these times, I should learn to rebel against the flesh. If I followed the flesh, I couldn't satisfy God. I knew very well that every gathering was beneficial for my understanding of the truth and the truth I heard was a priceless treasure. Although every gathering late at night in the woods was physically tiring and difficult, this was also a test for me, to see if I could suffer to obtain the

truth and have true faith in God. My parents wanted me to pursue fame and fortune in the world and find a good job, to give my family a good life and make them proud. This was what they wanted and what they expected of me. But if I listened to my parents and stopped going to gatherings, although I didn't have to suffer, I wouldn't gain the truth. I would be the same as I was, only concerned with entertaining myself and pursuits of the flesh, which are meaningless. That I can now accept God's work of the last days and enjoy God's supply of so much truth is the greatest blessing. The suffering I endured was nothing next to understanding the truth, and all of it was meaningful. Thinking of this, I was willing to let go of fleshly pleasures and didn't care what my family said about me. I only hoped to rely on God to overcome these difficulties. Later, by reading Almighty God's words, my state gradually improved. Slowly, I understood that only in the difficulties of this environment could I seek more of God's intentions and have firmer faith in God, and for this, I was very grateful to God!

I continued going to gatherings in the woods. Once, while I was at a gathering, someone, I don't know who, found out and told my parents. At breakfast the next day, my mother said to me, "I thought you stopped attending gatherings after you met the doctor of theology. I didn't know you were running off to gatherings in the woods at night. Aren't you afraid?" As she spoke, she started to cry. That was the first time I saw my mother cry in front of me. I didn't know what to say. Tears were welling up in my eyes. I didn't want to hurt my parents, but I knew I couldn't give up following Almighty God. I felt so conflicted. At this time, I remembered a passage of God's words: **"When God works, cares for a person, and looks upon this person, and when He favors and approves this person, Satan trails closely behind, trying to mislead the person and bring them to harm. If God wishes to gain this person, Satan will do everything in its power to**

**obstruct God, using various wicked ploys to tempt, disturb and impair the work of God, in order to achieve its hidden objective. What is this objective? It does not want God to gain anyone; it wants to snatch possession of those whom God wishes to gain, it wants to control them, to take charge of them so they worship it, so they join it in committing evil acts, and resist God. Is this not Satan's sinister motive? ... In warring with God, and trailing along behind Him, Satan's objective is to demolish all the work God wants to do, to occupy and control those whom God wants to gain, to completely extinguish those whom God wants to gain. If they are not extinguished, then they come to Satan's possession, to be used by it—this is its objective”** (The Word, Vol. 2. On Knowing God. God Himself, the Unique IV). After contemplating God's words, I understood. God works to save man, while Satan tries its best to use people around us to hinder and stop us from following God and accepting God's salvation. At this time, I recalled how Job's wife tempted him to forsake God. This was Satan's trick. I thought of how during this time, my friends disturbed me, the pastor and my family also hindered and threatened me, pressuring me to stop believing in God. These were all Satan's temptations and tricks. My parents said they feared I would be driven out of the village and would have nowhere to go. My mother also said she was worried about me. These words sounded like she was concerned, but in reality, it was actually Satan using my family to prevent me from following God. Satan wanted to force me to give up, continue following the pastor, stay in religion, and lose God's salvation. I couldn't fall for Satan's tricks. After that, I continued attending gatherings and reading Almighty God's word. I know that in the days to come, I may still face many temptations and besiegement by Satan, and I may experience many setbacks, but I know in my heart that Almighty God's word is the truth. That I can read God's word, experience God's

work, and gain the truth is deeply meaningful for me. No matter how much I suffer, it is worth it!

### **3. Finally Seeing My Deceitfulness**

By Marlene, Hong Kong

I was responsible for watering new believers in the church. A while back, there were several newcomers who I couldn't be sure were suitable for cultivation as team leaders. My concern was the waste of time and energy if they turned out to be unsuitable after I cultivated them. If I didn't cultivate them, however, my supervisor might say that I was making heavy demands on them and not paying enough attention to their cultivation, or that I simply lacked ability to cultivate them. I was in something of a pickle and didn't know what to do. I felt I should ask my supervisor about this and let her decide. Then I wouldn't be solely responsible if something went wrong, and I wouldn't have to be pruned even if the newcomers really were unsuitable. When I got in touch with my supervisor, I didn't say directly that I wasn't a good judge of people and didn't know what to do. Instead, I waffled on about those newcomers' various circumstances and difficulties: So-and-so has a poor internet connection and is hard to contact, so-and-so is busy with work, and so-and-so doesn't talk much in gatherings.... Then, afraid the supervisor would say I was pigeonholing people, I added, "But they're active in gatherings and eager in their seeking, so I'll try my hardest to cultivate them." At first, I thought she'd say that these newcomers weren't suitable for cultivation. That way it would be her decision. I wouldn't be responsible and wouldn't risk paying a price for cultivating them. So I was surprised when she didn't offer an answer, and asked sternly, "What are you trying to say? You have a roundabout way of talking which is hard to follow. I've noticed it before. First you talk about the newcomers' problems, making it sound like they aren't worth cultivating, then you say you'll do your best with them, so that it's impossible to know what you



actually think.” Hearing that made me pretty upset: “Does she mean I’m zigzagging, like a snake, rather than addressing the issue head-on? Am I really that bad? Or is she just venting because she’s in a bad mood?” I realized that this was the wrong way to think about it; that the sister wouldn’t have said it for no reason at all and it must reflect how she really felt. I had revealed a corrupt disposition without being aware of it, and the sister was helping me by pointing it out. So I said to her, “I don’t quite grasp the issues you’re referring to, but I’m willing to accept this and to fully reflect on myself.”

Afterward, I kept mulling over what my supervisor had said, and I prayed to God, asking Him to guide me to better know myself. I remembered that the words of Satan were particularly crooked, and lacking in transparency. Jehovah God asked Satan: **“From where come you?”** Then Satan answered Jehovah, and said, **“From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it”** (Job 1:7). God exposes and dissects the way Satan speaks here, saying: **“So, how then do you feel when you see Satan answering in this way? (We feel that Satan is being absurd, but also deceitful.) Can you tell what I am feeling? Every time I see these words of Satan, I feel disgusted, because Satan talks, and yet its words contain no substance. Did Satan answer God’s question? No, the words Satan spoke were not an answer, they did not yield anything. They were not an answer to God’s question. ‘From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it.’ What is your understanding of these words? Just where does Satan come from? Have you received an answer to this question? (No.) This is the ‘genius’ of Satan’s cunning schemes—not letting anyone discover what it is actually saying. Having heard these words you still cannot discern what it has said, even though it has finished answering. Yet Satan believes it has answered perfectly.**

**How then do you feel? Disgusted? (Yes.) Now you begin to feel disgust in response to these words. Satan's words have a certain characteristic: What Satan says leaves you scratching your head, unable to perceive the source of its words. Sometimes Satan has motives and speaks deliberately, and sometimes governed by its nature, such words emerge spontaneously, and come straight out of Satan's mouth. Satan does not spend a long time weighing such words; rather, they are expressed without thinking. When God asked where it came from, Satan answered with a few ambiguous words. You feel very puzzled, never knowing exactly where Satan is from. Are there any among you who speak like this? What kind of way is this to speak? (It is ambiguous and does not give a certain answer.) What kind of words should we use to describe this way of speaking? It is diversionary and misleading. Suppose someone does not want to let others know what they did yesterday. You ask them: 'I saw you yesterday. Where were you going?' They do not tell you directly where they went. Rather, they say: 'What a day it was yesterday. It was so tiring!' Did they answer your question? They did, but they did not give the answer you wanted. This is the 'genius' within the artifice of man's speech. You can never discover what they mean, nor perceive the source or intention of their words. You do not know what they are trying to avoid because in their heart they have their own story—this is insidious. Are there any among you who also often speak in this way? (Yes.) What then is your purpose? Is it sometimes to protect your own interests, sometimes to maintain your own pride, position, and image, to protect the secrets of your private life? Whatever the purpose, it is inseparable from your interests, linked to your interests. Is this not the nature of man?" (The Word, Vol. 2. On Knowing God. God Himself, the Unique IV). From what God's words**

revealed, I saw that Satan always harbors hidden motives and sly tricks in its words and deeds. In order to conceal its shameful intentions, it speaks circuitously and it equivocates. This baffles listeners, who are unable to fathom its meaning. I reflected on how I tended to speak with my brothers and sisters the way Satan does, baffling them with my circuitous use of language. When they asked me how many newcomers could be cultivated at the church I oversaw, and how those newcomers were progressing, all it required from me was a few words on the number of newcomers and what their status was, but I never gave a direct answer. I'd pick out examples of poor performance by the newcomers and mention various relevant factors, so that the brothers and sisters would think the newcomers were not suitable for cultivation rather than there being an issue with me not cultivating them. And then I'd change my tune, saying, "But newcomers must be cultivated. Let's have a go first, and see." I had just been talking about them being problematic, and now I was saying I'd work on cultivating them. That wasn't a straightforward answer. It was such a roundabout response that no one had a clue what I meant. God says that the reason Satan uses circuitous language, harboring hidden motives and sly tricks, is to protect its own interests. Then I asked myself what I was trying to achieve by speaking that way to the brothers and sisters. Thinking it over, I saw that I always started out by presenting problems, so others would know it wasn't a matter of me not being focused on cultivating people, but rather that they, for various reasons, weren't good candidates. Then I'd conclude by saying I'd have a go at cultivating them and see how it went, to show the brothers and sisters that I took due responsibility for cultivating newcomers and had a positive attitude. This way, they wouldn't say I was pigeonholing people and didn't want to risk paying a price for cultivating them. Behind this roundabout way of speaking lay despicable motives. I skirted around issues when I

spoke with my supervisor, wanting her to guess what I meant without knowing for sure, and ultimately getting her to decide whether or not to cultivate these newcomers. In this way the outcome would be to my benefit, no matter what. If anyone followed up on why I hadn't cultivated them, I could smoothly shift blame onto my supervisor. And if the newcomers did progress, then everyone would see I was capable of cultivating such people, which would prove that I had some work capability and would make me look good. The way I spoke was exactly Satan's way of speaking, as exposed by God—burying my motives and zigzagging, like a snake, so that I could achieve my aims without others knowing what I was up to. I was sly and deceitful, just like Satan. Ostensibly I was exploring with the supervisor whether the newcomers could be cultivated, but in reality I was trying to steer her to decide for me, so I could offload responsibility. It was extremely treacherous of me! A normal person in this situation reaches for the relevant principles, in order to act according to principle and better cultivate newcomers for the good of church work. But the goal I was aiming for was to offload responsibility, so as to protect my interests, status and reputation. How could I be so sly and treacherous? The reason the supervisor pruned and exposed me was that I habitually spoke and acted on the basis of my deceitful disposition, never self-reflecting. I was repugnant to God and repellent to others. I prayed and swore to God that from that moment on I would pay more attention to the motives and goals underlying what I said and did, and that I would put being honest into practice. Later, when my brothers or sisters asked me about new believers, I sometimes wanted to start off with their problems again, so that it wouldn't be my responsibility if they couldn't be cultivated. When I realized I was being deceitful again and adopting the wrong motive, I consciously prayed, and rebelled against myself, and talked about the newcomers fairly and

objectively. When I consciously put being honest into practice, I discovered there were many matters in which I could be devious and deceitful, and that my motives were sometimes buried deeply out of sight.

One day, the supervisor said a new believer I'd watered was attending gatherings organized by Sister Alaina, and he liked her fellowship. I started thinking then that this newcomer was quite arrogant, had various notions, and liked secular trends. He wasn't regularly participating in my gatherings, and watering him was a real effort, so I figured I'd have less on my plate if Alaina could water him instead. If I directly brought up the idea of transferring him to Alaina, the supervisor might say I was being crafty and wanted to hand off new believers who were hard to water. But if the supervisor herself suggested transferring him, then I could offload the burden as a matter of course. So, I probed with a leading question: "Did the newcomer say he prefers Alaina's fellowship?" The supervisor said he did. I quickly followed up, "Since that's the case, maybe we should go with what he likes? Anyway, he doesn't often attend my gatherings. What do you think?" I was waiting for her to say he should be transferred. But she didn't decide right away. Later on, I felt a vague sense of unease: Wasn't I speaking with ulterior motives again? Why did I always have such shameful intentions? Why couldn't I just be open and direct about what I thought?

One day, I looked for words of God to eat and drink that were relevant to my state, and I read these words of His: **"Some people always speak in a way that makes it difficult for people to wrap their minds around it. Sometimes their sentences have a beginning but no end, sometimes an end but no beginning. You can't tell at all what they mean to say, nothing they say makes any sense to you, and if you ask them to explain clearly, they won't. They often use pronouns in their speech. For example, they report something, and say, 'That guy—um, he was**

thinking that, and then the brothers and sisters weren't very ...' They could go on for hours and still not express themselves clearly, stuttering and stammering, not finishing their sentences, just uttering some single words that have no connection to one another, leaving you none the wiser after hearing it—and anxious, even. In fact, they have undertaken a lot of studies and are well-educated—so why are they incapable of uttering a complete sentence? This is a problem of disposition. They are so slippery that it takes great effort to speak even a bit of the truth. There is no focus to anything antichrists say, there is always a start but no end; they blurt out half a sentence then swallow the other half, and they are always testing the waters, because they don't want you to understand what they mean, they want you to guess. If they tell you directly, you'll realize what they're saying and see right through them, won't you? They don't want that. What do they want? They want you to guess on your own, and they are happy to let you believe what you guess is true—in that case, they didn't say it, so they don't bear any responsibility. Beyond that, what do they gain when you tell them your guess at what their meaning is? Your guess is exactly what they want to hear, and it tells them your ideas and views on the matter. From there, they will speak selectively, choosing what to say and what not to say, and how to say it, and then they will take the next step in their plan. Every sentence ends with a trap, and as you listen to them, if you keep finishing their sentences, you will have completely fallen into the trap. Is it tiring for them to always speak like this? Their disposition is wicked—they don't feel tired. It's completely natural for them. Why do they want to create these traps for you? Because they can't see your views clearly, and they fear that you will see through them. At the same time they are trying to stop you from understanding

**them, they are trying to understand you. They want to elicit your views, ideas, and methods out of you. If they succeed, then their traps have worked. Some people stall by often saying ‘hmm’ and ‘hah’; they don’t express a specific point of view. Others stall by saying ‘like’ and ‘well ...,’ covering up what they’re really thinking, using this in place of what they actually want to say. There are many useless function words, adverbs, and auxiliary verbs in every sentence of theirs. If you were to record their words and write them out, you would discover that none of them reveal their views or attitudes on the matter. All of their words contain hidden traps, temptations, and enticements. What is this disposition? (Wicked.) Very wicked! Is there trickery involved? These traps, temptations, and enticements they create are called trickery. This is a common characteristic of people with the wicked essence of antichrists. How does this common characteristic manifest? They report the good news but not the bad, they exclusively speak in pleasing terms, they speak haltingly, they partially hide their true meaning, they speak confusingly, they speak vaguely, and their words carry temptations. All of these things are traps, and all of them are means of trickery”** (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Seven: They Are Wicked, Insidious, and Deceitful (Part Two)). God tells us that antichrists always beat about the bush when they speak. They talk in ambiguities, leaving listeners none the wiser. They are always tempting and luring, trying to draw others into a trap to achieve their goals and ultimately avoid responsibility. It’s just like Satan telling Eve she wouldn’t necessarily die if she ate the fruit. Satan’s words were full of temptations and enticement, not directly revealing its goals, but tempting others into sin without taking responsibility. As God has revealed: **“Within every person, there is a satanic disposition; each of their hearts contain the myriad poisons with which Satan tempts God and entices**

**man. Sometimes, their speech is laced with the voice and tone of Satan, and an intent to tempt and entice. The ideas and thoughts of man are filled with Satan's poisons and they emit its stench. Sometimes, the looks or actions of men carry this same stench of temptation and enticement"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Choosing the Right Path Is the Most Crucial Part of Belief in God). I was the same, always speaking in a roundabout way with the brothers and sisters, tempting and luring for my own despicable motives. I didn't wish to spend time and energy on a newcomer. I wanted to use this chance to dump him. But I didn't want the supervisor to know I'd pigeonholed and rejected a newcomer. To maintain my image of being conscientious and loving to newcomers, I tentatively suggested to her that we should consider the newcomer's feelings and do as he wished. I was trying to steer her into suggesting he be transferred to Alaina's gatherings, so I could achieve my goal. The way I was speaking was exactly as revealed by God: **"If you were to record their words and write them out, you would discover that none of them reveal their views or attitudes on the matter. All of their words contain hidden traps, temptations, and enticements. What is this disposition? (Wicked.) Very wicked!"** (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Seven: They Are Wicked, Insidious, and Deceitful (Part Two)). Whenever something came up, what poured from my mouth was all tests and temptation, and not a single honest word. Wasn't that an evil disposition at play? I preferred to beat around the bush rather than letting anyone see what I was really driving at. I thought it would be foolish to expose my failings by blurting out what I wanted. That was for idiots! I thought my deceitful way of speaking was clever—that I was ingenious, intelligent and thinking two steps ahead of everyone—and that this was the way to protect my interests. Being slippery and deceitful was the principle I lived by, and I dismissed what God tells us about being



honest and transparent in word and deed. I felt I'd lose out if I lived that way. My perspective had long been distorted. I had adopted the ways of Satan as a behavioral norm, being tricky and deceptive at every turn. It was a little frightening to reflect on this and see how dark and evil I was. I saw how deeply Satan had corrupted me and that I was barely human at all. I spoke and acted like this in my daily life, too. Once, I remembered really liking a designer handbag my aunt bought. I couldn't ask for it directly but I didn't want to spend a heap of money buying one for myself, so I put on a concerned voice and said, "It's not even going to get used—what a waste! You've already got a bag of that brand. What did you buy this one for?" For my aunt, it was as if I was being considerate and didn't want her to waste money on things she didn't need. What I really meant, though, was that the bag was wasted just sitting there, so why not give it to me? And sure enough, she gave me the bag. With a few short words I got her to "offer" the bag to me. I was always like that, not stating directly what I wanted but getting people to give it to me of their own accord. Looking back on all those things, I wondered how I could have been so deceitful. I wished I could turn back time and take back the sickening things I'd said. At that point I realized that the way antichrists speak and act, and their evil disposition, as exposed by God, were rife in me. I'd been that way for years, and I would slip into that deceitful way of speaking without even realizing it. My corrupt disposition was a major problem. It would be massively dangerous if I did not deal with it and make a change.

**I read God's words: "That God asks for people to be honest proves that He truly loathes and dislikes deceitful people. God's dislike of deceitful people is a dislike of their way of doing things, their dispositions, their intents and their methods of trickery; God dislikes all of these things. If deceitful people are able to accept the truth, admit**

to their deceitful dispositions, and are willing to accept God's salvation, then they too have a hope of being saved—for God treats all people equally, as does the truth. And so, if we wish to become people who please God, the first thing we must do is change our principles of comportment. No longer can we live according to satanic philosophies, no longer can we get by on lies and trickery. We must cast off all our lies and become honest people. Then God's view of us will change. Previously, people always relied on lies, pretense, and trickery while living among others, and used satanic philosophies as the basis of their existence, their lives, and the foundation for their comportment. This was something that God loathed. Among nonbelievers, if you speak frankly, tell the truth, and are an honest person, then you will be slandered, judged, and forsaken. So you follow worldly trends and live by satanic philosophies; you become more and more skilled at lying, and more and more deceitful. You also learn to use insidious means to achieve your goals and protect yourself. You become more and more prosperous in Satan's world, and as a result, you fall deeper and deeper into sin until you cannot extricate yourself. In God's house, things are precisely the opposite. The more you lie and play deceitful games, the more God's chosen people will become sick of you and forsake you. If you refuse to repent and still cling to satanic philosophies and logic, if you use ploys and elaborate schemes to disguise and package yourself, then you are very likely to be revealed and eliminated. This is because God loathes deceitful people. Only honest people can prosper in God's house, and deceitful people will eventually be forsaken and eliminated. All of this is preordained by God. Only honest people can have a share in the kingdom of heaven. If you do not try to be an honest person, and if you don't experience and practice in the direction of pursuing the

**truth, if you don't expose your own ugliness, and if you don't lay yourself bare, then you will never be able to receive the Holy Spirit's work and gain God's approval"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. The Most Fundamental Practice of Being an Honest Person). God's words taught me that He likes honest people and is disgusted by those who are deceitful. Only honest people can gain His salvation, while the deceitful will be exposed and eliminated. Of people I've seen cleansed away and eliminated from the church during my years of faith, there were those who were consistently perfunctory and engaged in deception in their duty, and those who, for the sake of prestige and status, hid behind a false front or even misled people with various schemes and ploys. But God sees all things, and He arranges circumstances to expose and eliminate every one of them. Deceitful people truly find no footing in God's house. Thinking back on when I was watering and cultivating new believers, there were plenty of deviations and problems in the way that I behaved, yet I didn't focus on seeking the truth to deal with them. I was always being devious and deceitful, finding reasons and excuses to cover up for my corruption and inadequacies, and as a result, newcomers weren't getting cultivated. If things carried on like that, I too would be spurned and eliminated by God. Looking at the simple and honest brothers and sisters around me, I could see there was much they didn't understand in their duties, and there were errors and oversights, but they didn't shirk their responsibilities. In order to understand the truth, grasp principles, and perform their duties to the satisfaction of God, they were able to put aside personal pride, be simple and open, confess their failings and inadequacies, and seek from others. It was clear to see that God was enlightening and guiding them. Even if they were of average caliber or even, at times, a little foolish, God would still guide them, helping them gradually learn the principles of truth and

improve in their duties. From this I realized that God blesses those who are simple and honest. This is His righteousness. Understanding this, I realized that speaking truth and being honest might mean that people see who I really am, but that's no bad thing. It might be a little embarrassing, in the moment, but behaving this way is open and aboveboard, and it pleases God. Plus, while I might expose my own problems by being simple and open, my brothers and sisters would never look down on me for it. They'd help me make corrections, and guide me along with them into the principles. And practice of that kind wouldn't be of detriment to my duty. God's kingdom gospel is expanding so quickly now, and it requires the help of plenty of new believers. But I had cultivated barely any new believers. Wasn't this obstructing and disrupting the work of the church? I had been resisting God! God says: **"The more you lie and play deceitful games, the more God's chosen people will become sick of you and forsake you. If you refuse to repent and still cling to satanic philosophies and logic, if you use ploys and elaborate schemes to disguise and package yourself, then you are very likely to be revealed and eliminated. This is because God loathes deceitful people. Only honest people can prosper in God's house, and deceitful people will eventually be forsaken and eliminated. All of this is preordained by God."** God's words are so clear. Whatever path someone chooses and whatever kind of person they seek to be, has a direct bearing on their outcome and fate. I thought of how, on many occasions, I simply blundered through situations without seeking the truth or self-reflecting to better know myself. I was living by my satanic nature. I didn't even enter into the most basic truth of being honest, or making changes in my life disposition. I remained a deceitful person who belonged to Satan. How could I hope to be saved? Only by practicing being an honest person would I be on the right path.

Later, I continued to seek, and by reading God's words my path to practicing honesty became a little clearer. God's words say: **"When people engage in deceit, what intentions does this come from? What aim are they trying to achieve? Without exception, it is to achieve fame, gain, and status; in a nutshell, it is for the sake of their own interests. And what lies at the root of the pursuit of self-interest? It is that people see their own interests as being more important than everything else. They engage in deceit in order to benefit themselves, and their deceitful disposition is thereby revealed. How should this problem be resolved? First you must discern and know what interests are, what they bring to people exactly, and what the consequences of pursuing them are. If you can't figure this out, then forsaking them will be easier said than done. If people don't understand the truth, then nothing is harder for them to give up than their own interests. That's because their life philosophies are 'Every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost' and 'Man dies for wealth as birds do for food.' Clearly, they live for their own interests. People think that without their own interests—that if they were to lose their interests—they wouldn't be able to survive. It's as if their survival is inseparable from their own interests, so most people are blind to all but their own interests. They see their own interests as higher than anything else, they live for their own interests, and getting them to give up their own interests is like asking them to give up their own lives. So, what should be done in such circumstances? People must accept the truth. Only when they understand the truth can they see through to the essence of their own interests; only then can they begin to relinquish and rebel against them, and be able to endure the pain of letting go of that which they love so much. And when you can do this and forsake your own interests, you will feel more at ease and more at**

peace in your heart, and in so doing you will have overcome the flesh. If you cling to your interests and refuse to give them up, and if you are not in the least bit accepting of the truth, in your heart, you may say, ‘What’s wrong with trying to benefit myself and refusing to suffer any losses? God hasn’t punished me, and what can people do to me?’ No one can do anything to you, but with this faith in God, you will ultimately fail to gain the truth and life. This will be a huge loss for you—you will not be able to attain salvation. Is there any greater regret? This is what ultimately comes from pursuing your own interests. If people only pursue fame, gain, and status—if they only pursue their own interests—then they will never gain the truth and life, and ultimately, they will be the ones who suffer a loss. God saves those who pursue the truth. If you do not accept the truth, and if you are incapable of reflecting upon and knowing your own corrupt disposition, then you will not truly repent, and you will have no life entry. Accepting the truth and knowing yourself is the path to growth in life and to attaining salvation, it is the chance for you to come before God to accept His scrutiny, judgment, and chastisement, and to gain the truth and life. If you give up on pursuing the truth for the sake of pursuing fame, gain, and status and your own interests, this is tantamount to giving up on the opportunity to accept God’s judgment and chastisement, and to attain salvation. You are choosing fame, gain, and status and your own interests, but what you are giving up is the truth, and what you are losing is the life, and the chance to be saved. Which means more? If you choose your own interests and give up on the truth, is this not foolish? To put it in vernacular terms, this is suffering a great loss for the sake of a small advantage. Fame, gain, status, money, and interests are all temporary, they are all ephemeral,

whereas the truth and life are eternal and immutable. If people resolve the corrupt dispositions that cause them to pursue fame, gain, and status, then they have hope of attaining salvation. Moreover, the truths that people gain are eternal; Satan cannot take these truths away from people, nor can anyone else. You relinquish your interests but what you gain are the truth and salvation; these results are yours, and you gain them for yourself. If people choose to practice the truth, then even though they have lost their interests, they are gaining God's salvation and eternal life. Those people are the smartest ones. If people give up the truth for the sake of their interests, then they lose the life and God's salvation; those people are the most foolish ones. What a person chooses—their interests or the truth—is incredibly revealing. Those who love the truth will choose the truth; they will choose to submit to God and to follow Him. They would rather abandon their own interests to pursue the truth. No matter how much they have to suffer, they are determined to stand firm in their testimony to satisfy God. This is the fundamental path for practicing the truth and entering the truth reality” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Knowing One's Disposition Is the Foundation of Changing It). “There are often intents behind people's lies, but some lies don't have any intent behind them, nor are they deliberately planned. Instead, they just come out naturally. Such lies are easy to resolve; it is lies with intents behind them that are difficult to resolve. This is because these intents come from one's nature and represent Satan's trickery, and they are intents that people intentionally choose. If someone does not love the truth, they will be unable to rebel against the flesh—so they should pray to God and rely on Him, and seek the truth to resolve the issue. But lying cannot completely be resolved all at once. There will be the occasional relapse,

even multiple relapses. This is a normal situation, and as long as you resolve each and every lie you tell, and keep up with this, then the day will come when you will have resolved them all. The resolution of lying is a protracted war: When one lie pours out, reflect on yourself, and then pray to God. When another one comes out, reflect on yourself and pray to God again. The more you pray to God, the more you will hate your corrupt disposition, and the more you will long to practice the truth and live it out. Thus, you will have the strength to abandon lies. After a time of such experience and practice, you will be able to see that your lies have grown much fewer, that you are living with much greater ease, and that you need not lie or cover up your lies anymore. Though you may not speak much day to day, every sentence will come from the heart and be true, with very few lies. How will it feel to live like that? Will it not be freeing and liberating? Your corrupt disposition will not constrain you and you will not be bound by it, and you will at least begin to see the results of being an honest person. Of course, when you come across special circumstances, you may sometimes let a small lie slip. There may be times when you encounter danger or trouble of some sort, or want to maintain your safety, at which times lying cannot be helped. Still, you must reflect on it, understand it and resolve the problem. You should pray to God and say: 'There are still lies and trickery in me. May God save me from my corrupt disposition once and for all.' When one is intentionally exercising wisdom, it does not count as a revelation of corruption. This is what one must experience to be an honest person. In this way, your lies will become ever fewer. Today you tell ten lies, tomorrow you might tell nine, the day after that you'll say eight. Later, you'll only say two or three. You'll tell the truth more and more, and your practice of being an honest person will come



ever closer to God's intentions, His requirements, and His standards—and how good that will be! To practice being honest, you must have a path, and you must have an aim. First, resolve the problem of telling lies. You must know the essence behind your telling of these lies. You must also dissect what intents and motives drive you to speak these lies, why you are possessed of such intents, and what their essence is. When you have clarified all these issues, you will have thoroughly seen through the problem of lying, and when something befalls you, you will have principles of practice. If you carry on with such practice and experience, then you will surely see results. One day you'll say: 'It's easy being honest. Being deceitful is so tiring! I don't want to be a deceitful person anymore, always having to think about what lies to tell and how to cover up my lies. It's like being a person with a mental illness, speaking in contradictions—someone who doesn't deserve to be called "human"! That sort of life is so tiring, and I don't want to live like that anymore!' At this time, you'll have a hope of being truly honest, and it will prove that you have begun to make progress toward being an honest person. This is a breakthrough. Of course, there may be some of you who, when you begin to practice, will be mortified after speaking honest words and laying yourselves bare. Your face will go red, you will feel ashamed, and you will fear the laughter of others. What should you do, then? Still, you must pray to God and ask that He give you strength. You say: 'Oh God, I want to be an honest person, but I'm afraid that people will laugh at me when I speak the truth. I ask that You save me from the bondage of my satanic disposition; let me live by Your words, and be freed and liberated.' When you pray like this, there will be ever more brightness within your heart, and you will say to yourself: 'It's good to put this into practice. Today, I have

**practiced the truth. Finally, I've been an honest person for once.'** As you pray like this, God will enlighten you. He will work in your heart, and He will move you, allowing you to appreciate how it feels to be an honest person. This is how the truth must be put into practice. At the very start you will have no path, but through seeking the truth you will find a path. When people begin seeking the truth, they don't necessarily have faith. Not having a path is hard for people, but once they understand the truth and have a path of practice, their hearts find enjoyment in it. If they are able to practice the truth and act according to principles, their hearts will find comfort, and they will gain freedom and liberation” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. The Most Fundamental Practice of Being an Honest Person). In God's words I found the principles of practice for dealing with lies and deceit. First and foremost, we must let go of personal interests. This aspect of practice is particularly important. The goal of lying is to protect your interests and achieve your aims, and when this is the objective, you resort to lies and trickery. So, it's vital to first let go of personal interests. This helps tackle the problem of deceit in the heart. It is also important to frequently self-reflect, allowing God to scrutinize our every word and deed. When we find ourselves wanting to speak or act deceitfully, we must question what it is we're trying to achieve. If we become aware of ourselves harboring deceitful intentions or revealing an evil disposition, then we must quickly come before God to pray, and turn ourselves around. We must consciously practice being honest and learn to open up to our brothers and sisters, exposing our thoughts, perspectives, corruption and flaws, and seeking the truth to resolve them. That's the only way to gradually cleanse a deceitful, evil, satanic disposition. Having realized this, I sought out my supervisor and opened up about my despicable motives when talking with her, and I apologized. Not only did

she not reject me—she too opened up and we took stock of the deficiencies in our duties together. Practicing like this made me feel at ease. I felt that I was no longer living in the shadows, and this gave me peace of mind.

I'm not entirely free of my deceitful, evil, corrupt disposition, but I have the faith and will to be an honest person who is pleasing to God, and to focus on being honest and open to God's scrutiny in every single thing I say and do in life.

## **4. The Consequences of Failing to Do Actual Work**

By Xiaomo, China

I'm in charge of the gospel work in the church. Once, some brothers and sisters reported that a group leader, Xinyue, was arrogant, autocratic, and unable to work well with others or take suggestions. Everyone felt constrained by her and it impacted the gospel work. Everyone tried to point this out and help her, but she just verbally acknowledged and accepted it, and didn't change at all after. Later, we discussed it and decided to dismiss her from her post. I was really embarrassed by this, because I'd fellowshiped with Xinyue a few times before about her problems, but to my surprise, instead of being resolved, her issues just got worse. It made me reflect and wonder what the real reason for that was. I thought back to when I'd first taken over the job. I noticed Xinyue's group was the most successful in gospel work, and really engaged in their duty. I thought quite highly of them. Especially when I saw how capable Xinyue was, I felt that there shouldn't be any major issues with her as group leader, so I didn't follow up on their work much. Though some sisters reported their issues to me, I didn't take them seriously. I felt that since they did well in gospel work, even if there were some problems, it wasn't a big deal. Sometimes when I fellowshiped with them, I just gave them some simple pointers, and I didn't follow up to see if the problems had been resolved afterward. I remember once when we were discussing work, I noticed Xinyue and Xiaoli were in disagreement. They were both really arrogant and stuck to their own views. I found some words of God that addressed their states to fellowship on, and seeing that they were both able to reflect and willing to change, I felt like a burden had been lifted from my mind. Then again,

they'd had trouble working together for a long time, so I knew that fellowshiping once with them could not resolve the problem, and I should follow up on things and see if their states had really changed. But then I thought, to fellowship with them more, I'd have to find passages of God's words and try to fathom their states, which is really taxing. Besides, they were doing their duties normally, so I thought it'd be fine not to check up on them. So I just left it at that. There was another time when I saw Xinyue and another sister disagreeing during fellowship. The other sister made a reasonable suggestion, but Xinyue refused to accept it, and kept insisting she was right. That sister finally had no choice but to give in. Seeing how self-righteous Xinyue was, I wanted to reveal her problem, but then I thought of the time and energy I'd have to put into fellowshiping on it, and the other work I still had to take care of. As there wasn't any clear conflict or friction between them, maybe it wasn't as bad as I thought. The less trouble the better. Plus, Xinyue was a group leader, so if she revealed some arrogance, she should be able to resolve it through seeking. And so, I didn't point out her problem. Looking back on it all, I was well aware that Xinyue was arrogant and couldn't work well with others. Also she was a leader, so by brushing off such an important matter, I was being really irresponsible!

I read this in God's words later: **“No matter what important work a leader or worker does, and what the nature of this work is, their number one priority is to be au fait with how work is going on. They must be there in person to follow up on things and ask questions, getting their information first-hand. They must not simply rely on hearsay or listen to other people's reports; instead, they must observe with their own eyes the situation of the personnel, how work is progressing, and learn about what difficulties there are, whether any areas are at odds with requirements of the Above, whether there are**

violations of principles, whether there exist any disturbances or disruptions, whether there is a lack of necessary equipment or related instructional materials regarding professional work—they must stay on top of all of this. No matter how many reports they listen to, or how much they glean from hearsay, neither of these beats paying a personal visit; it is more accurate and reliable for them to see things with their own eyes. Once they are familiar with all aspects of the situation, they will have a good idea of what’s going on” (The Word, Vol. 5. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers (4)). “No matter which work they are inspecting, leaders who carry a burden will always be able to identify problems. For any problems which have to do with professional knowledge, or to do with breaches of the principles, they will be able to identify, enquire about, and gain an understanding, and when they discover a problem, they resolve it promptly. Intelligent leaders and workers only resolve problems to do with the church’s work, professional knowledge, and truth principles. They do not pay small matters in daily life any heed. They look after every facet of the work of spreading the gospel which God commissioned. They ask about and inspect any problems which they are able to perceive or discover. If they are unable to solve the problem themselves at that moment, then they gather with other leaders and workers, fellowship with them, seek the truth principles, and think of ways to resolve it. If they encounter a big problem which they really cannot resolve, then they promptly seek from the Above, and allow the Above to handle it and resolve it. Leaders and workers such as this are people who are principled in their actions. No matter what problems there are, so long as they have seen them, they will not let them go; they insist on fully understanding these problems and then resolving them one by one. Even if they are not

**resolved thoroughly, it can be assured that these problems will not arise again”** (The Word, Vol. 5. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers (4)). I was really ashamed when I saw what God requires of leaders and workers. I hadn’t borne a burden for the gospel work. Not only had I failed to promptly follow up on the gospel work, but I hadn’t gained a detailed understanding of the brothers’ and sisters’ states. Like Xinyue being a group leader but also being hard to work with—I should have resolved this through fellowship, but I just briefly pointed out her problem without talking to the others to gain a detailed understanding of it. I also hadn’t exposed the nature of her issue or its consequences. After that, I hadn’t inquired about whether she’d changed or not. I hadn’t pondered on whether this was an issue of her disposition essence or a revelation of corruption, whether she was suited to be a group leader, and other details like that. So her problems were never resolved, and the gospel work was impacted. Later, I’d seen that Xinyue was still arrogant, self-righteous, and autocratic, and I knew I should fellowship with her to resolve this, or it would delay the work. But I still didn’t take care of it, because I didn’t want the hassle. I was just superficially going through the motions of resolving problems, content with doing surface-level work, mentioning the problem and nothing more. I paid no mind to whether the issue was actually resolved or not. I was being irresponsible, I wasn’t doing my job or any actual work. That’s how a false leader behaves. The church had put me in charge of gospel work, hoping that I’d be able to do my duty according to God’s requirements, to be serious and responsible in my work, and to use the truth principles to resolve the brothers’ and sisters’ issues so that the gospel work could proceed smoothly. But instead, when problems arose that needed resolving, I did nothing, thinking the less trouble, the better. I was truly

acting as a false leader and hindering the gospel work's progress. My attitude toward my duty was really disgusting to God!

Afterward, I sought and pondered on the true root of my failure to do real work. I read something in God's words: **"In their work, leaders and workers should be considerate of God's intentions and be loyal to Him. The best way for them to behave is to proactively recognize and solve problems. They must not remain passive, especially when they have these current words and fellowship to act as a basis. They should take the initiative to thoroughly resolve actual problems and difficulties by fellowshipping on the truth, and do their work exactly how they ought to. They should promptly and proactively follow up on the progress of the work; they cannot always wait for orders and prompting from the Above before they reluctantly take action. If leaders and workers are always negative and passive and do not do real work, they are unworthy of serving as leaders and workers, and should be dismissed and reassigned. There are many leaders and workers now who are very passive in their work. They only ever do a bit of work after the Above sends orders and pushes them; otherwise, they slack off and procrastinate. The work in some churches is quite chaotic, some of the people who do duties there are incredibly slack and perfunctory, and do not get any real results. These problems are already very severe and terrible in nature, but the leaders and workers of those churches still act like officials and overlords. Not only are they unable to do any real work, they cannot recognize or solve problems. This paralyzes the church's work and causes it to stagnate. Whenever a church's work is in a terrible mess and there is no sign of order, there is definitely a false leader or an antichrist in charge. In every church where a false leader is in charge, the church's work will be in shambles and a complete mess**



—there is no doubt about that. ... What is going on when people are blind to the work that needs to be done? (They do not bear a burden.) It is accurate to say that they do not bear a burden; they are also very lazy and crave comfort, take breaks whenever they can, and try to avoid any extra tasks. These lazy people often think, ‘Why should I worry so much about this? Worrying too much will just make me age faster. How will I benefit from doing that, and from running around so much, and exhausting myself so much? What will happen if I burn out and get sick? I don’t have the money to pay for treatment. And who will take care of me when I’m old?’ These lazy people are just this passive and backward. They have not an ounce of the truth, and cannot see anything clearly. They are clearly a bunch of muddled people, are they not? They are all muddled-headed; they are oblivious to the truth and have no interest in it, so how can they be saved? Why are people always undisciplined and lazy, as though they are the living dead? This touches on the issue of their nature. There is a kind of laziness in human nature. No matter what task people are doing, they always need someone to supervise them and spur them on. Sometimes people are considerate of the flesh, crave physical comfort, and always hold something back for themselves—these people are full of devilish intentions and cunning schemes; they are truly no good at all. They always do less than their best, no matter what important duty they are doing. This is irresponsible and disloyal” (The Word, Vol. 5. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers (26)). “All false leaders never do real work, and they act like their leadership role is some official position, enjoying the benefits of status. The duty that ought to be performed and work that ought to be done by a leader they treat as an encumbrance, as a bother. In their hearts, they brim with defiance

toward the work of the church: If you have them keep an eye on the work and find out issues that exist within it that need to be followed up on and resolved, they are full of reluctance. This is the work that leaders and workers are supposed to do, this is their job. If they don't do it—if they are unwilling to do it—why do they still want to be a leader or worker? Do they do their duty in order to be considerate of God's intentions, or in order to be an official and enjoy the benefits of status? Is it not shameless to be a leader if they just wish to hold some official position? No one is of lower character—these people have no self-respect, they are without shame. If they wish to enjoy fleshly ease, they should hurry back to the world and strive, take, and seize as they are able. No one will interfere. God's house is a place for God's chosen people to do their duties and worship Him; it is a place for people to pursue the truth and to be saved. It is not some place for anyone to relish in fleshly ease, much less a place that allows people to live in princely comfort. False leaders are a type of person that knows no shame; they are brazen, unabashed, and have no reason. No matter what actual work is allotted to them, they do not treat it as important. They put it at the back of their mind, and while their mouth gives an excellent response, they do not do any real work. Is this not a lack of virtue? ... No matter what work some people do or what duty they perform, they are incompetent in it, they cannot shoulder it, and they are incapable of fulfilling any of the obligations or responsibilities that a person ought to. Are they not trash? Are they still worthy of being called human? With the exception of simpletons, the mentally incompetent, and those who suffer from physical impairments, is there anyone alive who ought not to do their duties and fulfill their responsibilities? But this kind of person is always slippery and slacking

**off, and does not wish to fulfill their responsibilities; the implication is that they do not wish to be a proper human being. God gave them the opportunity to be a human being, and He gave them caliber and gifts, yet they cannot use these in doing their duty. They do nothing, but wish to relish enjoyment at every turn. Is such a person fit to be called a human being? No matter what work is given to them—whether it be important or ordinary, difficult or simple—they are always perfunctory and slippery and slacking off. When problems arise, they try to push responsibility for them onto other people, taking no responsibility, and they wish to keep living their parasitic lives. Are they not useless trash?”** (The Word, Vol. 5. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers.

The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers (8)). His words really pained me. All that time, God had been fellowshiping in detail on the responsibilities of leaders and workers, but I hadn't entered into this at all. I was slacking off, being irresponsible, indulging the flesh, and getting no results in my duty. I was the sort of parasite and good-for-nothing God exposes. When handling Xinyue's problem, I was well aware that the issue wasn't resolved, but I craftily just did whatever would save me trouble. I realized that I was often ineffective in my duty because I was lazy and only cared about my own comfort. At first, when the others had troubles in their gospel sharing, or weren't sure of some principles, I'd fellowship with them to resolve these issues. But because some of them progressed slowly or had complex issues, I felt it was too much trouble and too exhausting to help them. I'd need to seek and ponder, and patiently fellowship with them, so I chose to avoid that, resolving only glaring issues and shelving difficult ones. I downplayed big problems and ignored small ones. So lots of issues were never resolved. I pandered to the flesh all along without really fixing things. As a result, there hadn't been progress in the gospel work for a long time. It was

entirely because I was lazy by nature, treasured the flesh, and wasn't devoted or responsible in my duty. I thought of God's words: **"This is a serious dereliction of duty! You have lost the attitude and responsibility that as leaders and workers you should have toward your duties"** (The Word, Vol. 5. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers (26)). **"Is such a person fit to be called a human being?"** (The Word, Vol. 5. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers (8)). I was a leader, so it was my responsibility to do everything I could to resolve the issues I found. But I just wouldn't walk the right path—I was always thinking of my own comfort. Whenever I had to take real action and do some real work, I bailed. This harmed the church's work and the brothers' and sisters' life entry. Doing my duty in that way was seriously negligent! I thought of how, in God's work in the last days to resolve man's corruption, He has expressed millions of words, reminding and exhorting, judging and chastising, warning and exposing, using every means to fellowship with us meticulously lest we not understand and be unable to enter the truth. To save mankind, so deeply corrupted by Satan, He has worried and suffered so much, expended so much effort and paid a great price. But while enjoying the sustenance of so much truth from God, I took on important work in the church without thinking about repaying His love. I wasn't able to suffer a little or pay a bit of a price for my duty. As soon as I had to take serious action and do some real work, I ran away. I always wanted God's rewards and blessings in exchange for a tiny bit of effort. I was so selfish and vile, lacking conscience and reason. At that point I finally saw that always thinking of the flesh and longing for comfort was living without dignity and being unreliable. I was a lazy leader, a false leader. Doing my duty like that gave me temporary comfort, but I kept losing chances to gain the truth because of my laziness, and God would

ultimately eliminate me. I was saving a little but losing a lot, I was so foolish! I thought of something the Bible says: “And the prosperity of fools shall destroy them” (Proverbs 1:32). I knew some brothers and sisters who were dismissed because they always thought of the flesh and comfort, without doing real work. Coveting comfort disgusts God, and it could even ruin our chance at salvation. God is holy and righteous and He scrutinizes my intents in my duty. I couldn’t keep doing my duty that way. God’s house isn’t the place for me to be coveting fleshly comfort, it’s the place for me to fulfill my duty and practice the truth. Since I’d accepted that duty, I should put my all into doing it well. I prayed to God in repentance: “God, thank You for setting up this situation to show me that I’ve coveted fleshly comfort in my duty and haven’t been responsible at all. From now on, I want to do my best to really work at my duty.”

After that, by reading God’s words, seeking and reflecting, I saw that I harbored another mistaken view. Almighty God says: **“Leaders and workers must get an understanding of the supervisors of important work, gospel directors, every team leader, directors of film production teams, and so on, from various sources, and more intensely observe and examine these people, before they can be sure of them. Only by carefully assigning duties to people in this way can they ensure the arrangements are appropriate, and that the people will be effective in their duties. Some people say, ‘Even nonbelievers say, “Neither doubt those you employ nor employ those you doubt.” How can God’s house be so untrusting? They are all believers; how bad can they be? Aren’t they all good people? Why must God’s house get to understand them, supervise them, and observe them?’ Are these words valid? Are they problematic? (Yes.) Does getting to understand someone and observing them in depth, and interacting with them in close proximity adhere to**

**the principles? It is in complete adherence to the principles. Which principles is it in adherence to? (Item four of the responsibilities of leaders and workers: ‘Keep abreast of the circumstances of supervisors of different work and personnel responsible for various important jobs, and promptly alter their duties or dismiss them as necessary, so as to prevent or mitigate losses caused by using unsuitable people, and guarantee the efficiency and smooth progress of the work.’) This is a good point of reference, but what is the actual reason for doing this? It is because people have corrupt dispositions. Although, today, many people do a duty, there are only a few who pursue the truth. Very few people pursue the truth and enter reality as they do their duty; for most, there are still no principles to the way they do things, they are still not people who truly submit to God; they merely claim that they love the truth, and are willing to pursue the truth, and are willing to strive for the truth, yet it is still unknown how long their resolve will last. People who do not pursue the truth are liable to reveal their corrupt dispositions at any time or place. They are devoid of any sense of responsibility toward their duty, they are often perfunctory, they act as they wish, and are even incapable of accepting pruning. As soon as they become negative and weak, they are liable to abandon their duty—this happens often, nothing is more common; such is the way all who do not pursue the truth behave. And so, when people have yet to gain the truth, they are unreliable and untrustworthy. What does it mean that they are untrustworthy? It means that when they encounter difficulties or setbacks, they are likely to fall down, and to become negative and weak. Is someone who is often negative and weak someone who is trustworthy? Definitely not. But people who understand the truth are different. People who truly understand the truth are bound to have a**

**God-fearing heart, and a heart of submission to God, and only people with a God-fearing heart are trustworthy people; people without a God-fearing heart are not trustworthy. How should people without a God-fearing heart be approached? They should, of course, be given loving assistance and support. They should be followed up on more as they do their duty, and given more help and instruction; only then can they be guaranteed to do their duty effectively. And what is the aim of doing this? The chief aim is to uphold the work of God's house. Secondary to this is in order to promptly identify problems, to promptly provide to them, support them, or prune them, setting right their deviations, and making up for their shortcomings and deficiencies. This is beneficial to people; there is nothing malicious about it. Supervising people, observing them, trying to understand them—this is all in order to help them enter the right track of faith in God, to enable them to do their duty as God asks and according to principle, to stop them from causing any disturbances or disruptions, and to stop them from doing futile work. The aim of doing this is entirely about showing responsibility toward them and toward the work of God's house; there is no malice to it”** (The Word, Vol. 5. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers (7)). God's words show us one of the principles to practice in our work. We should keep a close eye on the brothers and sisters under our purview, particularly those doing key work, because everyone has corrupt dispositions and lacks the truth reality, and can't help but do things out of corruption. We can't blindly trust anyone or take a hands-off approach—that shows that we are irresponsible in our work. I was exactly like that. Sometimes the others pointed out my issues, and in the moment, I felt determined to change, but often it was just a wave of enthusiasm. When I had to really act on it, I was

still constrained by corrupt dispositions, unable to practice the truth. That's why I needed the others' supervision and help, to practice and enter better. Everyone has shortcomings and isn't able to grasp the truth principles, so it's inevitable that some issues or oversights appear in our duties, and we sometimes reveal corruption and act willfully. At those times, leaders must supervise and follow up, gain a deep understanding of how people's duties are going, find problems and fix deviations, and stop harm coming to the church's work. But I'd been really blind and foolish. I saw that Xinyue seemed active in her duty and did well in gospel work, so I didn't worry about her. I handed over such important work to her and then didn't give it another thought. My partner mentioned there were problems in the group, but I didn't take them seriously. When I learned that Xinyue was arrogant and didn't work well with others, I didn't look into it in detail. I thought since she was the group leader, she'd seek and enter after a few simple pointers, and that I didn't need to worry about it. But things turned out completely differently from how I'd imagined. The person I worried least about had the most serious problems. Because of her arrogant disposition, the others were constrained and couldn't do their duties normally. All this came of me not doing real work and not viewing things and people through God's words. We reviewed that group's work later on and found it still had some problems. They'd gained lots of people through their sharing of the gospel, but some of those newcomers weren't in line with the principles. Some didn't have good humanity and had to be cleared out, which not only wasted resources, but was also a hassle for the church. The more I followed up on their work, the more specific problems I found, and the more I saw that I hadn't been doing real work before. I only looked at the surface—when work seemed to be progressing smoothly, I thought that no one had problems in their duty. I looked at things so superficially. I saw how



pathetic it was that I didn't understand the truth, and warned myself that, in the future, I'd have to look at things according to the truth, fulfill my responsibilities, and supervise the work of those under my supervision. I also felt just how important God's requirement that leaders do detailed work in person really is. It truly helps us step onto the path to doing our duties in a way that is up to standard.

I read more of God's words after that: **“If you truly possess caliber of a certain degree, truly have a grasp of professional skills within the scope of your responsibility, and are not an outsider to your profession, then you just have to abide by one phrase, and you will be able to be loyal to your duty. Which phrase? ‘Put your heart into it.’ If you put your heart into things, and put your heart into people, then you will be able to be loyal and responsible in your duty. Is this phrase easy to practice? How do you put it into practice? It doesn't mean to use your ears to hear, nor your mind to think—it means using your heart. If a person can truly use their heart, then when their eyes see someone do something, act in some way, or have some sort of response to something, or when their ears hear some people's opinions or arguments, by using their heart to ponder and contemplate these things, some ideas, views, and attitudes will come up in their mind. These ideas, views, and attitudes will make them have a deep, specific, and correct understanding of the person or thing, and at the same time, will give rise to suitable and correct judgments and principles. Only when a person has these manifestations of using their heart does it mean they are loyal to their duty”** (The Word, Vol. 5. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers (7)). God's words showed me a path of practice. To do my duty well, I had to learn to be attentive and responsible. I had to take real action for everything I saw and heard to enter

my heart, and to discover problems in my duty. Otherwise, I was just going through the motions, blind to any problems. I also had to do everything in my power to resolve the problems I found, seek help from those above me when I couldn't fix something, do and achieve whatever I could, fulfill my responsibilities, have a clear conscience, and accept God's scrutiny. I couldn't rely on my notions and imaginings in my duty. I had to follow the truth principles and God's requirements until the problems were resolved. Though there were still many issues in our work, I had to do my best to resolve them, and no matter how well that went, I needed to first learn to put my heart into it and fulfill my responsibilities. The gospel work is important to God's house, and in this critical, end time, if I continued to take my duty lightly, seek comfort and protect my own interests, that would be a selfish, despicable way to live. So I prayed to God, "God, my stature is small and I don't have great caliber, but I want to put everything into my duty and practice according to Your requirements."

Later, I discovered that the church's gospel work wasn't very effective, mainly because some gospel workers were new and weren't clear on the truths about bearing witness to God's work. So I arranged for Li Mei to go and give them some actual instruction. At first, I'd spend time analyzing the religious notions of potential gospel recipients and understanding the gospel workers' issues with Li Mei. But later, when my own work got busy, I thought about handing over all those problems to Li Mei, so that I wouldn't have to worry about them too much. When that thought occurred to me, I felt guilty. The gospel work wasn't going well, and Li Mei wanted to discuss it with me after she went and learned about those issues, but I'd hoped to push that hard work onto her, like a bureaucrat. That was despicable. So I prayed to God and consciously rebelled against the flesh. When Li Mei gave me feedback on the issues, I got involved actually,

fellowshipping with her and seeking the truth to resolve those problems. With this actual cooperation, I could gain an understanding of the group's work and progress more quickly, and promptly find and resolve the gospel workers' problems and struggles. I saw God's guidance through this actual cooperation. Some new gospel workers gradually came to grasp the principles, the gospel work became more fruitful, and some newcomers took on duties soon after accepting God's new work. Though recently I've been expending more time and energy, when I truly put my heart into my duty, it doesn't feel difficult or tiring. Actually, I've become equipped with more truth principles, and by quieting myself before God in prayer and seeking when there are problems, I've grown closer to God and been more focused in my duty. I still have lots of shortcomings in my duty. I'm still a long way from performing it in an up-to-standard manner. But through my experiences, I've reflected on and learned about my issue of not doing real work, and I have direction for how I should do my duty in the future. Everything I've gained is thanks to the enlightenment and guidance of God's words.

## 5. Fellowship Must Be Openhearted

By Julia, Poland

At the beginning of 2021, I accepted the work of Almighty God in the last days. I actively attended meetings and read God's word, and after more than two months, I was elected as a watering deacon. We had a deacon meeting every weekend to discuss the problems and difficulties we encountered in our duties and fellowship on what we gained, what corruption we exposed, and how we reflected and understood it through God's word. Before every meeting, I was very nervous and would think for a long time, because I didn't know what to say to the church leaders and other deacons. I worried about speaking out about my corruption and shortcomings, because I feared they would have a bad opinion of me. For example: I had just started watering newcomers. I didn't know many things, and I lacked experience. I worried that the newcomers wouldn't like me and would think I couldn't water them well, so I didn't want this duty anymore. But I didn't want to open up about my state at the deacon meeting, because I worried that if I did, my brothers and sisters would think I lacked the ability to fellowship with new believers. Also, I was impatient with some newcomers, and I didn't want to say it, because I worried if I mentioned it at the meeting, they would think I had bad humanity. But if I didn't say anything, they might think I was less capable than others. I didn't want to embarrass myself or make them look down on me. After thinking about it, I finally decided just to tell them about something unimportant and not too embarrassing, such as that I was lazy, which is a problem most people have. That way, I wouldn't appear inferior to others.

And so, at the meeting, a church leader asked about my experiences during this time, and what knowledge I gained of my corrupt dispositions,

and I fellowshiped as I had planned. When I finished, I breathed a sigh of relief, but I felt uneasy, knowing I hadn't told the truth, and that what I did went against God's intentions. I thought of the Lord Jesus' words: **"Let your communication be, Yes, yes; No, no: for whatever is more than these comes of evil"** (Matthew 5:37). **"Truly I say to you, Except you be converted, and become as little children, you shall not enter into the kingdom of heaven"** (Matthew 18:3). Thinking of what God says, I felt very guilty. Lies come from Satan, and are evil. God loves honest people, and only honest people can enter the kingdom of heaven. Liars and hypocrites cannot enter God's kingdom. Such people are hated by God, and they will definitely be eliminated by God in the end. I was very upset, and I was afraid of being spurned by God. I prayed to God and asked Him to guide me in being an honest person. I made up my mind to tell the truth at the next meeting and open up about my corruption. But when the time came, I still didn't have the courage to say it. I was worried that if I spoke about my corruption and shortcomings, my brothers and sisters would think that I was more corrupt than them. I felt like it was too hard to tell the truth and even wanted to stop attending the deacon meetings for that reason. But I was worried my brothers and sisters would ask me why I didn't come, and then I would have no idea what to say. The more I thought, the more conflicted and miserable I felt. I didn't know what to do. At one meeting, the brothers and sisters fellowshiped on their experiential knowledge as usual, and I didn't know what to say at all, so I just listened silently. I was disappointed in myself, I always disguised myself and failed to practice the truth time and again. I couldn't even speak an honest word. I felt miserable, so I prayed to God, asking Him to lead me out of this state.

Later, I read this passage of God's word: **"You must seek the truth to resolve any problem that arises, no matter what it is, and by no means**

**disguise yourself or put on a false face for others. Your shortcomings, your deficiencies, your faults, your corrupt dispositions—be completely open about them all, and fellowship about them all. Do not keep them inside. Learning how to open yourself up is the first step toward life entry, and it is the first hurdle, which is the most difficult to overcome. Once you have overcome it, entering the truth is easy. What does taking this step signify? It means that you are opening your heart and showing everything you have, good or bad, positive or negative; baring yourself for others and for God to see; hiding nothing from God, concealing nothing, disguising nothing, free of deceit and trickery, and being likewise open and honest with other people. In this way, you live in the light, and not only will God scrutinize you, but other people will also be able to see that you act with principle and a degree of transparency. You do not need to use any methods to protect your reputation, image, and status, nor do you need to cover up or disguise your mistakes. You do not need to engage in these useless efforts. If you can let these things go, you will be very relaxed, you will live without constraints or pain, and you will live entirely in the light”** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Part Three). I understood from God’s word that we should never cover up for our own corrupt states. We should bring them before God and pray, reflect, try to understand ourselves, as well as open our hearts to expose our corruption to our brothers and sisters to seek the truth. This will help us better understand ourselves and resolve our corrupt dispositions. But, to maintain my face, I was unwilling to open up about my corruption and difficulties, nor did I want to seek the truth with my brothers and sisters. I always kept my heart closed so that no one could see through me, but I found no release living in the dark. I realized I couldn’t go on like this anymore, and that I should practice the word of God, open up about my

state to my brothers and sisters, and seek their help. Just after the meeting ended, a sister approached me to talk about her recent experience. I thought this was a good chance to open up and seek the truth, but I was still a little embarrassed, because I didn't know what she would think of me. I worried she would say I was a very dishonest person. So, I prayed to God, "God, I don't want to conceal myself anymore. I don't want to hide my true thoughts anymore. I'm very tired. God, I want to be an honest person, so please guide me." After I prayed, I told my sister all the things I didn't dare open up about in the meeting. After I finished speaking, I felt very relieved. The sister shared her understanding with me, and sent me a passage of God's words: **"The main characteristic of a deceitful person is that they never open their heart to fellowship with anyone, and they do not speak their heart even to their best friend. They are extraordinarily inscrutable. In fact, such a person may not necessarily be old, or have seen much of the world, and may even have little experience, yet they are extremely inscrutable. They are very cunning for their age. Is this not a deceitful person by nature? They hide themselves so deeply that no one can see through them. No matter how many words they speak, it is difficult to tell which are true and which are false, and no one knows when they are telling the truth or when they are lying. In addition, they are especially skilled at disguise and sophistry. They often hide the truth by giving people false impressions, so that all people see is their false appearance. They disguise themselves as a lofty, good, virtuous, and guileless person, as a person who is liked and approved of, and in the end, everyone worships them and looks up to them. No matter how long you spend with such a person, you never know what they are thinking. Their views and attitudes toward all manner of people, events, and things are hidden in their heart. They never tell these**

**things to anyone. They never fellowship on these things even to their closest confidant. Even when they pray to God, they may not confide what is in their heart or the truth about them. Not only that, they try to disguise themselves as a person with good humanity, who is very spiritual and dedicated to pursuing the truth. No one can see what kind of disposition they have and what kind of person they are”** (The Word, Vol.

4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Fifteen: They Do Not Believe in the Existence of God, and They Deny the Essence of Christ (Part One)). From God’s word, I realized deceitful people don’t speak from the heart with others, nor do they open up about their true state with others. Instead, they often conceal and disguise themselves. I saw that I was exactly as God revealed. Since becoming a watering deacon, I saw that I had many deficiencies, and that I also exposed many corrupt dispositions, and I had no love and patience for newcomers. I needed to open my heart and seek solutions to these problems with my brothers and sisters. But I worried that if I told the truth, they would look down on me and find me inferior, so I didn’t want to tell them my real state. I avoided the important things and told them things that didn’t matter, or problems I felt many people had. I did this to hide my dark side and my innermost thoughts. To make others have a good opinion of me, I disguised myself and gave a false impression. I was deceiving my brothers and sisters. I was so deceitful and hypocritical!

Later, my sister sent me another passage of God’s words: **“In reality, people all know why they lie. For the sake of personal gain and pride, or for vanity and status, they try to compete with others and pass themselves off as something that they’re not. However, their lies are eventually revealed and exposed by others, and they end up losing face, as well as their dignity and character. This is all caused by an excessive amount of lies. Your lies have become too numerous. Every word you**



say is adulterated and insincere, and not a single one can be considered true or honest. Even though you don't feel that you've lost face when you tell lies, deep down, you feel disgraced. Your conscience blames you, and you hold a low opinion of yourself, thinking, 'Why am I living such a pitiful life? Is it so difficult to speak the truth? Must I resort to lies for the sake of my pride? Why is my life so exhausting?' You don't have to live an exhausting life. If you can practice being an honest person, you will be able to live a relaxed, free, and liberated life. However, you have chosen to uphold your pride and vanity by telling lies. Consequently, you live a tiresome and miserable existence, which is self-inflicted. One may gain a sense of pride by telling lies, but what is that sense of pride? It is just an empty thing, and it is completely worthless. Telling lies means selling out one's character and dignity. It strips away one's dignity and one's character; it displeases God, and He detests it. Is this worthwhile? It is not. ... If you are someone who loves the truth, you will endure various hardships in order to practice the truth. Even if it means sacrificing your reputation, status, and enduring ridicule and humiliation from others, you won't mind—as long as you are able to practice the truth and satisfy God, it is enough. Those who love the truth choose to practice it and be honest. This is the correct path and it is blessed by God. If a person does not love the truth, what do they choose? They choose to use lies to uphold their reputation, status, dignity, and character. They would rather be deceitful, and be detested and rejected by God. Such people reject the truth and reject God. They choose their own reputation and status; they want to be deceitful. They do not care about whether God is pleased or if He will save them. Can such people still be saved by God? Certainly not, because they have chosen the wrong path. They can only

**live by lying and cheating; they can only live painful lives of telling lies and covering them up and racking their brains to defend themselves every day. If you think that lies can uphold the reputation, status, vanity, and pride you desire, you are completely mistaken. In reality, by telling lies, not only do you fail to maintain your vanity and pride, and your dignity and character, more grievously, you miss the opportunity to practice the truth and be an honest person. Even if you manage to protect your reputation, status, vanity, and pride at that moment, you have sacrificed the truth and betrayed God. This means you have completely lost your chance for Him to save and perfect you, which is the greatest loss and a lifelong regret. Those who are deceitful will never understand this”** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Only

an Honest Person Can Live Out True Human Likeness). After reading God’s word, I reflected on myself. To maintain my face and status and avoid being looked down on by others, before every meeting, I racked my brains to figure out how to fellowship during the meeting. If I opened up about my real state, I feared my brothers and sisters would have a bad impression of me. But if I said nothing, I also worried my brothers and sisters would think I was bad and look down on me. In desperation, I wanted to escape this situation. I saw that to maintain my face and status, I was racking my brain and preferred making myself miserable over opening up, being an honest person, and telling my brothers and sisters my real state and difficulties. I really was so deceitful! Although I maintained my image in people’s minds for a while, I lost my dignity, my chance to be an honest person, and my chance to seek the truth. I felt so tired at each meeting, and there was no sense of release at all. I was completely in bondage to my corrupt disposition. Brothers and sisters are meant to eat and drink God’s word at meetings, and fellowship on their experiential knowledge of God’s word. If

we have problems or difficulties, we can discuss them and resolve them together, and learn from each other's strengths. This way, it's easy to obtain the work of the Holy Spirit and understand the truth. But at meetings, I always thought about what to say so I wouldn't be looked down on, so people would have a good opinion of me. All of my thoughts were devoted to this. It was too hard and tiring to live this way.

Later, I read this in God's word: **"Are you able to open up and say what's really in your heart when fellowshiping with others? If someone always says what's truly in their heart, if they speak honestly, if they speak plainly, if they are sincere, and not at all perfunctory while performing their duty, and if they can practice the truth they understand, then this person has a hope of gaining the truth. If a person always covers themselves up and conceals their heart so that no one can see them clearly, if they give a false impression to deceive others, then they are in grave danger, they are in great trouble, it will be very difficult for them to gain the truth. You can see from someone's daily life and their words and actions what their prospects are. If this person is always pretending, always putting on airs, then this person is not someone who accepts the truth, and they will be revealed and eliminated sooner or later. ... People who never open their hearts, who always try to hide and conceal things, who pretend that they are respectable, who want people to think highly of them, who don't allow others to get a full measure of them, who want people to admire them—are these people not foolish? These people are the most foolish! That's because the truth about people will be exposed sooner or later. What path do they walk with this kind of comportment? This is the path of the Pharisees. Are hypocrites in danger or not? These are the people God detests the most, so do you think they are in danger or not? All**

**those who are Pharisees walk the road to destruction!”** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. In Giving One’s Heart to God, One Can Obtain the Truth). I understood from God’s words that God wants us to be honest people, speak simply and frankly, not lie or deceive, and when we expose corruption, we should be able to open up and talk about it, so that others can see our real thoughts. Living this way isn’t as tiring, and it’s easier to enter into the truth and walk the path of salvation. But those who always disguise themselves, conceal, cover up, and don’t let others see their state, walk the wrong path. They only become more and more hypocritical, and so can never resolve their corrupt dispositions. This is the road to perdition. I thought of the Pharisees two thousand years ago. They were outwardly pious, and spent their days explaining scripture for others in the synagogues. They also deliberately stood at crossroads and prayed to make people think they loved God. But they didn’t fear God at all, honor God as great, or obey God’s commandments. When the Lord Jesus appeared and worked, they clearly knew His words had authority and power, and came from God, but to keep their status and income, they frantically resisted and condemned God and finally crucified the Lord Jesus. I saw that the Pharisees were pious in appearance, but insidious and cunning in essence. They were skilled at disguise and deception. Everything they did was to mislead and control people, and to cheat people of their esteem and worship. The path they walked was one of resisting God. In the end, they were cursed and punished by God. I reflected on myself. To have a good image in the minds of others, I concealed my corruption and only talked about commonplace corruption that I revealed. This not only protected my image, but it made others see me as a simple, open person. Wasn’t I just as deceitful as the Pharisees? This frightened me. I couldn’t do this anymore. I had to be an honest person according to God’s requirements.

After that, my sister sent me another passage of God's word: **"There are now many people who focus on pursuing the truth and are able to seek the truth when things befall them. If you wish to resolve the wrong motives and abnormal states inside you, you must seek the truth to do so. To begin with, you must learn to open yourself up in fellowship based on God's words. Of course, you should choose the right recipient for open fellowship—at the least, you should choose someone who loves and accepts the truth, someone who has relatively good humanity, who is relatively honest and upright. It would of course be better if you could choose someone who understands the truth, from whose fellowship you may come away having been helped. Finding this sort of person with whom to open yourself up in fellowship and resolve your difficulties can be effective. If you choose the wrong person, someone who does not love the truth, but merely has a gift or talent, they will mock and despise you, and they will degrade you. This would not be to your benefit. In one regard, opening up and unveiling oneself is the approach one should take in coming before God and praying to Him; it is also how one should fellowship about the truth to others. Do not keep things bottled up, thinking, 'I have motives and difficulties. My inner state is no good—it's negative. I won't tell anyone. I'll just hold it in.' If you are always holding things in without resolving them, you will grow ever more negative, and your state will sink ever further. You will be unwilling to pray to God. This is a hard thing to reverse. And so, no matter what your state is, regardless of whether you are negative, or in difficulty, regardless of your own personal motivations or plans, no matter what you have come to know or realize through examination, you must learn to open up and fellowship, and as you fellowship, the Holy Spirit works. And how does the Holy Spirit work? He enlightens**

**and illuminates you and allows you to see the severity of the problem, He makes you aware of the root and essence of the problem, then makes you understand the truth and His intentions, little by little, and lets you see the path of practice and enter the truth reality. When a person can fellowship openly, this means that they have an honest attitude toward the truth. Whether a person is honest is measured by their attitude toward the truth”** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Part Three).

After I read God’s word, my sister fellowshiped: “To be an honest person, first we have to learn to open our hearts in seeking and fellowship. If we always conceal and cover up our corrupt states, and we don’t want to pray or open up in fellowship with others, it becomes difficult to get our issues resolved. For example, if someone is sick, they will find a doctor or ask someone with experience. That way, they can understand their condition, get the right medicine, and get the disease under control in time. Yet some people conceal their condition, so due to a lack of timely treatment, the condition gets worse, or even becomes life-threatening. If we want to resolve our states and difficulties, we need to fellowship openly and be honest people. This is the correct way to practice.” I could see that being an honest person and opening up ourselves are very important. I hadn’t believed in God long and didn’t understand the truth. Even though I recognized I had exposed a corrupt disposition, I couldn’t resolve it. I should practice being an honest person, open up about my state, and seek the truth. Only in this way could I gain God’s guidance, and it would also help resolve my corrupt disposition. I had just started watering newcomers, so it was normal that I didn’t understand many things. When I didn’t understand, I should open up to seek with my brothers and sisters. That way, I could master the principles of my duty bit by bit and perform my duty well. After that, I told another sister about my state during this period

and the difficulties in my duty. She didn't look down on me, and she sent me God's word and fellowshiped on her experience to help me. This allowed me to gain some knowledge of my state and the corruption I exposed, and gave me a path of practice. I felt a great sense of happiness and release. From then on, I consciously practiced being an honest person and opening up about my state.

One night, I hosted a group meeting. A church leader arranged for a group leader to host with me. This sister understood the truth better than me. During the meeting, she fellowshiped and resolved others' problems very effectively, and I was a little jealous. I worried the others would think I was inferior to her. After the meeting, the church leader asked if I had any thoughts to share. I knew I should be an honest person, open up about my corruption, and seek a solution. So, I told her what I had revealed in my heart and then she sent me God's word and told me about her experience. I realized I was jealous of my sister because I valued status, had an arrogant disposition, and wanted to be looked up to. I also realized that to let go of my jealousy, I had to pray to God more, see the nature and consequences of jealousy, consider the work of the church and my duty, and put the interests of the church first. This is in line with God's intention. At the same time, I also needed to properly deal with my own shortcomings and deficiencies and learn more from the strengths of others to make up for my shortcomings. That way, I could understand more of the truth. I was very glad to realize this. I truly felt that when I opened up to my brothers and sisters, instead of looking down on me, they all helped me a lot.

After experiencing it, I feel how important it is to be an honest person. Only by being an honest person and opening up can we receive the work of the Holy Spirit and come to understand the truth. I also see that being an

honest person can give us release and freedom, and let us live like humans.  
Thanks be to God!



## **6. What Comes of Being Guarded Against God**

By Luo Ying, China

In 2013, I was defined as a false leader and dismissed after it was found that I didn't seek principles in my duty and let my arrogant disposition dictate my actions, all of which caused disruptions and disturbances to the church's gospel work. During the time after I was dismissed, I felt quite negative and regretful. I gained some knowledge of my corrupt disposition through reading God's words and reflecting on myself, but deep down I still felt quite guarded toward God and thought that since I had such a corrupt disposition and had committed a very serious transgression, I absolutely should not do an important duty in the future. If I were to commit another transgression, at the very least I would be dismissed and in a more serious scenario, I would likely be thoroughly revealed, eliminated and lose my opportunity to attain salvation. Especially after seeing how some people who were talented, had caliber, and performed important duties were ultimately revealed as false leaders and dismissed or even defined as antichrists and expelled due to not seeking the truth, continually striving for status and reputation, acting based on their arrogant dispositions and failing to repent, which caused disruptions and disturbances to church work, I became even more certain what I thought was right. Going forward, I would just do duties that didn't carry large responsibilities and weren't as risky, that way I would still have a chance of surviving when God's work came to a close. Later on, my leader assigned me to the church's cleansing work. I thought to myself, "In the past, certain sisters doing cleansing work had been dismissed due to acting according to their corrupt dispositions and not abiding by principles, which led to disruptions and disturbances in the church's work. Yet, I have less

knowledge of the truth than them and have such a serious arrogant disposition—if I were to do something disruptive or disturbing, I’ll have committed evil!” After mulling it over, I decided to turn down the assignment. After that, the leader assigned me to text-based work, and I was quite pleased with the assignment. I thought that text-based work would not require me to make major decisions for the church and wouldn’t involve any risky situations, so I happily accepted it. In 2017, my leader once again sought me out, informing me that the church’s cleansing work was in dire need of workers and expressing the hope that I would consider God’s intention and take on a role in the cleansing team. I still felt a bit reluctant, but it occurred to me that I had already turned the assignment down once and if I turned it down again out of consideration for my future and prospects, I would be betraying God. I couldn’t be so conscienceless! In the midst of my suffering, I prayed to God and asked Him to guide me to break free from that improper state.

Later, I came across this passage of God’s words: **“Some people, no matter how many corrupt dispositions they reveal, do not seek the truth to resolve them. As a result, even after believing in God for many years, their dispositions remain unchanged. They think, ‘Whenever I do something, I reveal my corrupt dispositions; if I refrain from doing anything, then I won’t reveal them. Doesn’t that resolve the problem?’ Isn’t this abstaining from eating for fear of choking? What will the result of this be? It can only lead to starvation. If one reveals corrupt dispositions and does not resolve them, it is tantamount to not accepting the truth and dropping dead. What will be the consequences if you believe in God and do not pursue the truth? You will be digging your own grave. Corrupt dispositions are the enemy of your belief in God; they hinder your practice of the truth, your experience of God’s**

**work, and your submission to Him. As a result, you will not attain God's salvation in the end. Is that not digging your own grave? Satanic dispositions hinder you from accepting and practicing the truth. You cannot avoid them; you must confront them. If you do not overcome them, they will control you. If you can overcome them, you will no longer be constrained by them, and you will be free"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Part Three). Pondering over God's words I realized I, too, was abstaining from eating for fear of choking. Because I had been dismissed due to not seeking the truth, acting by my arrogant disposition and disrupting and disturbing the church's gospel work, I became guarded and full of misunderstanding. I was not willing to take on an important duty and was happy just to do any unimportant duty—all that mattered to me was that I didn't make any mistakes or have any issues. When faced with an assignment to an important duty, I unconsciously went into self-protection mode. Worrying that if I let my arrogant disposition dictate my actions, and caused disruptions and disturbances to the church's work again, I would likely be dismissed and eliminated, I always wanted to reject the assignment, thinking that I could protect myself in so doing. I always avoided dealing with my corrupt disposition and didn't seek the truth to resolve it. If I continued on like that, not only would my life disposition not transform in the slightest, whether I would attain salvation would also be uncertain. God's words also gave me a path of practice, showing me that I had to stop avoiding dealing with my corrupt disposition and should seek truth to resolve it.

Later on, I reflected on what corrupt nature was causing me to always be on my guard with God and reject assigned duties. One day, I came across this passage of God's words: **"I take pleasure in those who are not suspicious of others, and I like those who readily accept the truth;**

**toward these two kinds of people I show great care, for in My eyes they are honest people. If you are deceitful, then you will be guarded and suspicious toward all people and matters, and thus your faith in Me will be built upon a foundation of suspicion. I could never acknowledge such faith. Lacking true faith, you are even more devoid of true love. And if you are liable to doubt God and speculate about Him at will, then you are, without question, the most deceitful of all people. You speculate whether God can be like man: unpardonably sinful, of petty character, devoid of fairness and reason, lacking a sense of justice, given to vicious tactics, treacherous and cunning, pleased by evil and darkness, and so on. Is not the reason that people have such thoughts because they lack the slightest knowledge of God? Such faith is nothing short of sin!”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. How to Know the God on Earth).

Thinking over God’s words, I realized that I had a deceitful and wicked nature—my thoughts were like those of an unrighteous person, I was always speculating about God, and being on my guard against Him in the same way that I would with a bad person. I thought that assigning me to an important duty was meant to reveal me and eliminate me. Because I had been marked down for a transgression previously due to acting on my arrogant disposition and causing disruption and disturbances to the church’s work, I worried that if I was marked for another transgression, I would run the risk of being eliminated, and thus I lived in a state of guardedness and misunderstanding of God. So, when my leader assigned me to supervise the church’s cleansing work, I worried that I’d make mistakes in my judgments of people. If I mistakenly did wrong by a good person or allowed an evil person or antichrist to remain in the church, thereby saddling the church with a lurking danger, that would be considered a major transgression and I would likely be eliminated. Given these considerations, I made excuses to

pass off and reject the assignment. As I reflected on this now, I saw that if I hadn't had that experience of being dismissed, I never would have realized that I had such an arrogant disposition, much less would I have realized that I didn't seek the truth and acted according to my own will in my work and was walking the path of an antichrist. It was God's timely chastening and discipline that led me to reflect on myself and took me off the mistaken path I was walking. If not for God's actions, who knows what terrible evil I might commit while controlled by my arrogant and conceited nature. Despite the fact that I did suffer a bit as a result of being dismissed, the dismissal was really God's way of protecting and saving me and it was imbued with His earnest intentions. This failure left a deep impression on me: It showed me the severity of the consequences of acting by my arrogant disposition and allowed me to experience how God's righteous disposition brooks no offense. Going forward in my duty, I reminded myself not to let my arrogant disposition dictate my actions but to harbor a God-fearing heart. When I encountered issues, I would ask for suggestions from others and seek the truth principles to avoid making big mistakes. God's disposition is righteous and good, and His love and salvation are practical and real without the slightest falsity. As long as I reflected on myself and made realizations, God would give me chances to practice, but I was always speculating about God, putting my guard up against Him and believing He would be as petty and inconsiderate as a mere human, lacking fairness and righteousness. I thought that God was just using this duty to reveal and eliminate me—was I not slandering God? How deceitful I was! God likes honest people, and honest people can accept and practice the truth. As for me, my deceitful disposition compelled me to be suspicious of God and put up my guard against Him. I repeatedly passed off duties assigned to me and was unable to fulfill my responsibilities and duty with an open and honest

heart. If I kept on in that way, wouldn't I do myself in? Realizing this, I felt quite regretful and quietly prayed to God, willing to cherish the opportunity to do my duty, rely on God to do the cleansing work well and stop being resistant to and rejecting the assignment.

Going forward, I began carrying out cleansing work in the church. One day, one of the expulsion cases caught my attention. The candidate for expulsion was Ms. Li, who had previously served as my host. She had always served as a host and I had even envied her for doing a less important duty because I thought she would be less likely to commit a major transgression—practicing faith in that way would be less risky. However, reality disproved my notion—despite not doing an important duty, Ms. Li's arrogant disposition had never changed and she had even been using and manipulating her daughter who was a church leader in a vain attempt to exert control over the church, which had brought chaos to the church. It also occurred to me that most of the people who had been revealed as disbelievers and evil people had not been doing an important duty, but had ultimately been eliminated due to not pursuing the truth, acting recklessly and wantonly in accord with their satanic disposition, failing to repent, and committing all kinds of acts of evil. I was quite struck by this realization and later on, I came across this passage of God's words: **"Some people think, 'Anyone who leads is foolish and ignorant and is bringing about their own destruction, because acting as a leader inevitably makes people reveal corruption for God to see. Would there be so much corruption revealed if they didn't do this work?' What an absurd idea! If you don't act as a leader, will you not reveal corruption? Does not being a leader, even if you show less corruption, mean that you have attained salvation? According to this argument, are all those who do not serve as leaders the ones who can survive and be saved? Isn't this**

statement too ridiculous? People who serve as leaders guide God's chosen people to eat and drink the word of God and to experience God's work. This requirement and standard is high, so it is inevitable that leaders will reveal some corrupt states when they first begin training. This is normal, and God does not condemn it. God not only does not condemn it, but He also enlightens, illuminates, and guides these people, and places extra burdens on them. As long as they can submit to God's guidance and work, they will progress faster in life than ordinary people. If they are people who pursue the truth, they can embark on the path of being made perfect by God. This is the thing that is most blessed by God. Some people can't see this, and they distort the facts. According to human understanding, no matter how much a leader changes, God will not care; He will only look at how much corruption leaders and workers reveal, and only condemn them based on this. And for those who are not leaders and workers, because they reveal little corruption, even if they do not change, God will not condemn them. Isn't this absurd? Isn't it blasphemy against God? If you resist God so seriously in your heart, can you be saved? You cannot be saved. God determines people's outcomes mainly based on whether they have the truth and true testimony, and it mainly depends on whether they are people who pursue the truth. If they do pursue the truth, and they can truly repent after they are judged and chastised for committing a transgression, then as long as they do not say words or do things that blaspheme God, they will surely be capable of attaining salvation. According to your imaginings, all ordinary believers who follow God to the end can achieve salvation, and those who serve as leaders must all be eliminated. If you were asked to be a leader, you'd think that it would not be okay not to do it, but that if you were to serve

**as a leader, you would involuntarily reveal corruption, and that would be just like sending yourself to the guillotine. Isn't this all caused by your misunderstandings about God? If people's outcomes were determined based on the corruption that they reveal, no one could be saved. In that case, what would be the point of God doing the work of salvation? If this truly were the case, where would the righteousness of God be? Mankind would be unable to see God's righteous disposition. Therefore, you have all misunderstood God's intentions, which shows that you do not have true knowledge of God"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Part Three). Through God's words I learned that God doesn't determine people's outcomes based upon what duty they do or how much corruption they've revealed, but rather based upon whether or not they pursue the truth and focus on resolving their corrupt disposition after revealing corruption. God saves those that have been corrupted by Satan; if God determined people's outcomes based upon what corruption they revealed, then we would all be eliminated. Who would be able to attain salvation then? This belief of mine was just too ridiculous. I realized that even though leaders and supervisors often have their corruption and deficiencies revealed, as long as they pursue the truth, often reflect upon themselves and seek the truth to resolve their issues, they will come to understand more and more truth and their life entry will proceed ever more quickly. I thought about how those false leaders and antichrists who had been revealed and eliminated did not meet that fate because they were serving as leaders and supervisors, but rather because they were all averse to the truth, consistently sought after reputation and status, committed acts of evil that disturbed church work and failed to repent even after being pruned on many occasions. It also occurred to me that the reason I had been dismissed previously from my duty as a leader was also because I didn't



pursue the truth and didn't walk the right path—it had nothing to do with my doing an important duty. Yet, I failed to understand this fact, didn't reflect on the root cause of my fall and failure, didn't derive lessons that I could be aware of going forward, and instead used a fallacious viewpoint to speculate about and evaluate God. Was this not blasphemous toward God? I thought of Peter, who relished God's judgment and chastisement. He felt panicked and unsettled if God's judgment and chastisement left his side and felt he could no longer go on living. I saw that Peter loved the truth with all his heart, yearned for positive things, and cherished God's judgment, chastisement, chastening and discipline. Within that environment, he was able to reflect on his deficiencies and weaknesses and seek the truth and pursue transformation. As for me, after failing and being revealed, I sunk into a state of guardedness, misunderstanding, negativity and resistance. I was afraid that if I took on another important duty, I would be revealed again, and so I repeatedly turned down assignments. I saw that I was truly averse to the truth. I always desired to conceal my corrupt disposition, but in so doing, I was unable to gain self-knowledge, much less was I able to seek the truth to resolve my issues in a timely manner. Ultimately, I would just lose my chance at salvation as my disposition would never transform. I found some paths of practice through the experiences of Peter: When I revealed corruption, I should focus on knowing myself and seeking the truth to resolve it, and I should also take lessons from the failures of others to serve as a warning to myself.

In August of 2021, I was selected by my brothers and sisters to serve as a church leader. I still had my reservations about taking the assignment, so I prayed to God: "Oh God, I want to take on this duty and contribute my part, but I can't help but worry. Please guide and direct me." After prayer, I thought of how while eating and drinking God's words, I learned that God's

purpose in having people do duties is not to eliminate them, but rather to allow them to seek the truth, achieve dispositional transformation and attain salvation in the course of their duties. It also occurred to me that the church was currently split up, and many hands were needed for church work—at that crucial moment, I couldn't only consider my own personal interests. It would show an incredible lack of humanity to reject my assignment again! I had to consider God's intention and do the duty that I ought to do. Later on, I kept wondering, "Why did I become timid and afraid whenever I was assigned an important duty? What improper intentions lay behind this?" In the midst of my seeking, I came upon this passage of God's words: **"Antichrists never obey the arrangements of God's house, and they always closely link their duty, fame, gain, and status with their hope of gaining blessings and their future destination, as if once their reputation and status are lost, they have no hope of gaining blessings and rewards, and this feels like losing their lives to them. They think, 'I have to be careful, I mustn't be careless! God's house, the brothers and sisters, the leaders and workers, and even god can't be relied upon. I can't trust any of them. The person you can rely on most and who is most worthy of trust is yourself. If you're not making plans for yourself, then who is going to care about you? Who is going to consider your future? Who is going to consider whether or not you're going to receive blessings? Therefore, I have to make careful plans and calculations for my own sake. I can't make mistakes or be even slightly careless, otherwise, what will I do if somebody tries to take advantage of me?'" Therefore, they guard themselves against the leaders and workers of God's house, fearing that somebody will discern or see through them, and that they'll then be dismissed and their dream of blessings will be spoiled. They think they must maintain their**

**reputation and status in order for them to have hope of gaining blessings. An antichrist sees being blessed as greater than the heavens, greater than life, more important than pursuing the truth, dispositional change, or personal salvation, and more important than doing their duty well, and being a created being that is up to standard. They think that being a created being that is up to standard, doing their duty well and being saved are all paltry things that are hardly worth mentioning or remarking on, while gaining blessings is the only thing in their entire life that can never be forgotten. In whatever they encounter, no matter how great or small, they relate it to being blessed, and are incredibly cautious and attentive, and they always leave a way out for themselves. So when their duty is adjusted, if it is a promotion, an antichrist will think they have hope of being blessed. If it is a demotion, from team leader to assistant team leader, or from assistant team leader to a regular group member, they predict this to be a major problem and they think their hope of gaining blessings is slim. What sort of outlook is it? Is it a proper outlook? Absolutely not. This view is absurd!”** (The

Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Twelve: They Want to Withdraw When They Have No Status and No Hope of Gaining Blessings). God’s words exposed how antichrists only believe in God in order to gain blessings, take their own interests as the top priority in their duty and see the attainment of blessings as of utmost importance. Reflecting on my own behavior, I saw that I had been just like an antichrist. I didn’t ponder how to best do my duty as a created being and instead prioritized gaining blessings. In my duty, I was always timid and cautious, forever worried that if I slipped up and was marked for a transgression, I’d lose my chance to gain blessings. I realized that my behaviors were a result of satanic philosophies like “Every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost” and “Seek not merit, but to avoid blame”

becoming deeply rooted in my heart and functioning as my life principles. I just believed that people should live for themselves and it was right and proper to believe in God in order to gain blessings. When the church required me to perform my duties, I repeatedly weighed which duty would most allow me to gain blessings while at the same time not risk revealing my deficiencies and corruption and avoid being put in a situation where I may make any big mistakes. I was only willing to do a duty that satisfied these conditions. By contrast, I resisted and rejected any duty that wouldn't allow me to gain blessings. Gaining blessings dominated every aspect of my performance of my duty, and I was very picky about what duties I'd accept—I didn't consider the church's work in the slightest. Where was my submission and loyalty to God? I lived by satanic philosophies for worldly dealings, always seeking to get something in return from God and rejecting my assigned duty for the sake of my prospects and destination. Wasn't I betraying God? The more I reflected, the more I felt my intentions in believing in God were indeed quite despicable. If I didn't resolve this issue, it would become a stumbling block that would prevent me from setting foot on the right track of belief in God. Indeed, if I continued on like that and my life disposition did not transform, God would become disgusted with me and I would ultimately be eliminated. I thought of Paul, who spent his whole life expending himself for God just to be crowned and rewarded. In the course of his work, he did not pursue the truth or dispositional transformation, and despite working for many years, his satanic disposition remained untouched. Ultimately, he was punished by God for resisting Him. I was walking along the same path as Paul and if I didn't repent, God would become disgusted with me for not pursuing the truth and I would be eliminated! I knelt before God and prayed to Him: "Oh God, I've only now realized how selfish and despicable I have been. Ever since I entered the

faith, I've only sought blessings. I do not want to keep walking down this mistaken path. I just want to do my duty well and walk the path of pursuing the truth."

Later, I came across a passage of God's words, which helped me better understand the meaning and value of doing one's duties. Almighty God says: **"Regardless of what duty one performs, it is the most proper thing they could do, the most beautiful and just thing among humankind. As created beings, people ought to perform their duty, and only then can they receive the approval of the Creator. Created beings live under the Creator's dominion, and they accept all that is provided by God and everything that comes from God, so they should fulfill their responsibilities and obligations. This is perfectly natural and justified, and was ordained by God. From this it can be seen that, for people to perform the duty of a created being is more just, beautiful, and noble than anything else done while living on earth; nothing among humankind is more meaningful or worthy, and nothing brings greater meaning and worth to the life of a created person, than performing the duty of a created being. On earth, only the group of people who truly and sincerely perform the duty of a created being are those who submit to the Creator. This group does not follow worldly trends; they submit to the leadership and guidance of God, only listen to the words of the Creator, accept the truths expressed by the Creator, and live by the words of the Creator. This is the truest, most resounding testimony, and it is the best testimony of belief in God. For a created being to be able to fulfill the duty of a created being, to be able to satisfy the Creator, is the most beautiful thing among humankind, and is something that should be spread as a tale to be praised by all people. Anything the Creator entrusts to created beings should be unconditionally accepted**

by them; for humankind, this is a matter of both happiness and privilege, and for all those who fulfill the duty of a created being, nothing is more beautiful or worthy of commemoration—it is something positive. ... As a created being, when one comes before the Creator, they ought to perform their duty. This is a very proper thing to do, and they should fulfill this responsibility. On the basis that created beings perform their duties, the Creator has done even greater work among humankind, and He has carried out a further stage of work on people. And what work is that? He provides humankind with the truth, allowing them to gain the truth from Him as they perform their duties and thereby to cast off their corrupt dispositions and be purified. Thus, they come to satisfy God's intentions and embark on the right path in life, and, ultimately, they are able to fear God and shun evil, attain complete salvation, and no longer be subjected to Satan's afflictions. This is the effect that God would have humankind achieve in the end by performing their duties” (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Nine (Part Seven)). Indeed, just as children have an obligation and responsibility to be filial to their parents, so do created beings have a responsibility to perform their duties. There should be no transactional exchange involved in doing one's duty at all. I'm a created being, and God has given me life, bestowed me with all that I need and gracefully allowed me to come before Him to receive the supply of His words and perform a duty—this is a mark of God's love and mercy. God hopes that I will seek the truth and pursue life entry in the course of my duty. He wishes that through the situations He orchestrates for me, I will reflect on myself, gain self-knowledge, resolve my corrupt disposition, set foot on the path of fearing God and shunning evil, cast off my corruption, and attain His salvation. I had to cast aside my intention and desire to gain blessings, give

my heart to God, and candidly fulfill my responsibilities and duties to comfort God's heart. After that, I felt much more liberated in my duty; though I still felt guarded and misunderstood God at times, I started consciously seeking the truth, rebelling against myself, prioritizing the interests of the church, doing my duty according to the truth principles, and refraining from being timid and cautious. Once I began practicing in that fashion, I felt much more peaceful and at ease.

Thinking back on this whole experience, be it my time working as a leader or being dismissed, I realized that God had meticulously orchestrated all of these situations to allow me to gain self-knowledge and cast off my corruption. It was the enlightenment and illumination of God's words that allowed me to recognize my fallacious views and corruption and impurity in my duty, gain an understanding of God's earnest intention to save mankind, and finally break free from my misunderstanding and guardedness.

## 7. Days of Violation and Torture

By Chen Xinjie, China

One day around 11 a.m. in the summer of 2006, I was at my host's home listening to some hymns of God's words when the police suddenly burst into the room, and took me, my host Sister Zhao Guilan, and her 6-year-old daughter to the police station.

As soon as we entered the station, some female officers forcibly stripped off our clothes. When nothing but my underwear was left, I instinctively tried to avoid them so they couldn't take anything more off. A female officer stormed over, ripped off all of my underclothing, squeezed it very carefully, and then ripped it apart in her inspection. After their full-body search was done, we were taken into an office. There the police officers were paging through a small notebook they had found on me. Seeing there were a lot of phone numbers written in it, they figured that I was probably a leader, so they said they would report my case up to the Provincial Public Security Office. A section chief named Zhu asked me, "When did you start believing in Almighty God? What's your role in the church?" I didn't say anything at all, so he angrily grabbed me hard by the jaw and lifted my head—he was squeezing so tightly that I couldn't move at all. He smiled obscenely and said, "You're not bad looking, and you're nice and young. You could do anything, but you want to believe in God!" The other officers there were off to the side sniggering. I was revolted and outraged. I was thinking, "What sort of 'People's Police' is this? They're a pack of thugs, animals!" Chief Zhu asked me over and over again about my personal information and who the leader of the church was. When I wouldn't tell them anything, one of the officers started hitting me really hard. I got dizzy and my vision was blurring from the beating; I kept falling



down, and he kept dragging me back up to go on hitting me. While doing so, he yelled, “The Central Government decreed a long time ago that killing you people isn’t a crime, it doesn’t matter if we beat you to death! If you die, we can just take you out to the hills and bury you. No one will know!” Seeing how fiendish and terribly evil he looked put me in a state of panic and fear—I was afraid they really would beat me to death. I was crying out to God in my heart endlessly, asking for Him to watch over my heart. At that point something from God’s words came to my mind: **“Those in power may seem vicious from the outside, but do not be afraid, for this is because you have little faith. As long as your faith grows, nothing will be too difficult”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Utterances of Christ in the Beginning, Chapter 75). That’s very true. God has power over everything, so no matter how vicious and brutal the police were, they were in God’s hands too. If God didn’t allow me to die, even Satan could not take away my life. Even if the police really did beat me to death, my soul would still be in God’s hands. God’s words gave me faith and strength, and I was able to slowly calm down.

Failing to get the answer he wanted, Chief Zhu yelled furiously, “I can see you’d rather do things the hard way. I’ll pry that mouth of yours open today. No one gets past me—I’ve strung up two other people till they died just in the past two days.” Then a couple of officers came over, cuffed my hands, and suspended me from an iron gate with my feet dangling off the ground, and my whole bodyweight resting on my wrists. They dragged Guilan over after that. Her entire face was swollen from being hit and her hair was a complete mess. The police hung her from the iron gate, too. Chief Zhu gave a wicked grin when he saw our looks of pain and said, “Enjoy yourselves,” then turned around and walked out. As time went on, the pressure on my wrists from being handcuffed that way became

increasingly painful and it felt like my arms were being torn from their sockets. It was a splitting pain that left me in a full-body sweat. It wasn't long before my clothing was entirely soaked through. In an effort to alleviate the pain, I clenched my fists and did my best to put my heels against the iron gate's bars, but I just kept sliding down. My heart was palpitating and I was struggling to breathe. I felt like I was about to suffocate. Thinking about Chief Zhu saying that he'd hung two people up until they'd died in the past couple of days was frightening for me; I was worried I really would die there. I kept praying to God, "Oh God, I almost can't take this anymore. I can't hold out much longer—please save me...." After my prayer, I remembered a hymn of God's words titled **"Seek to Love God No Matter How Great Your Suffering."** God says: **"During these last days you must bear testimony to God. No matter how great your suffering, you should walk until the very end, and even at your last breath, still you must be faithful to God and at the mercy of God; only this is truly loving God, and only this is the strong and resounding testimony"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Only by Experiencing Painful Trials Can You Know the Loveliness of God). God's words immediately gave me faith and strength. My life and death were in God's hands, and I wouldn't die unless God allowed it. And even if I had just one breath remaining, I had to be devoted to God and stand firm in my witness for Him. And so, I kept praying and leaning on God, and before I knew it, I was able to slowly calm down and I was in a lot less pain. Turning my head, I saw a very resolute expression on Guilan's face, and I gave silent thanks to God. I knew that we'd made it that far entirely because of the strength and faith given to us by God.

The police let us down around 4 a.m. Our hands and feet were numb, without any feeling, so we just collapsed on the floor, barely alive. Seeing

the pain we were in, Chief Zhu asked me, very pleased with himself, “Have you given it some thought? Hanging by those handcuffs doesn’t feel so good, does it?” I ignored him. He was looking very sure of himself, assuming I couldn’t tolerate the torture and was sure to sell out my brothers and sisters. But he didn’t know that the more they persecuted us, the more clearly I could see how evil and barbaric they were, the more clearly I could see the Communist Party for the anti-God demon it is, and the more resolute I became in my belief that I must stand firm in my testimony and humiliate Satan. Their interrogation continued until the following afternoon. Then Chief Zhu took a call, and I heard him say, “Nothing works with this woman—not the carrot or the stick. I’ve been handling cases for decades, but I’ve never had one this tough!” After hanging up, he started cursing at me, “You believers in Almighty God are tougher than nails! I refuse to believe I can’t get your mouth open. We’re taking you somewhere else today, you won’t have it so easy over there. I’ve got ways of making you talk!” After that, he and another officer went into the room next door. I very faintly heard him say, “Take her to the snake pit and toss her in naked. That’ll get her talking!” Hearing the words “snake pit” startled me, I was terrified. The thought of snakes slithering everywhere gave me goosebumps all over my body, so I quickly prayed to God, asking Him to give me courage so I’d never be a Judas and betray Him, even if they did toss me into a pit of snakes. After praying I remembered Daniel being tossed into the lions’ den; they didn’t bite him, because God didn’t allow it. Wasn’t I also completely in God’s hands? These thoughts allowed me to slowly calm down. Later, Chief Zhu took a call, said he had an urgent case to handle, and then rushed off with another officer in tow. The moment he left, the officer who was left keeping an eye on me got a call from his family saying something had happened to his son, and he was in critical condition. He

handcuffed me to the iron chair and then left in a rush. I knew without a doubt that God had heard my prayer and opened up a way out for me. I said another prayer: “God, I’ve seen Your wondrous deeds, and I give You thanks!”

Seeing that the interrogation yielded no results, the police were so angry that they wouldn’t let me sleep. I was really sleepy, but the moment I closed my eyes, a cop would grab my shoulders and jostle them really hard, all the while shouting, “You want some sleep? You want some sleep?” They kept scaring me over and over like that and didn’t allow me to sleep. The police tortured me for four days and four nights, and didn’t allow me any food, water, or sleep. I was incredibly weakened by the torture, I had stabbing pains in my stomach, I was struggling to breathe, and my body was extremely exhausted. But no matter how they interrogated me, I didn’t tell them a thing. When Chief Zhu saw that none of their techniques were working, he slammed the door and left in anger. When he came back, he was carrying three or four pieces of paper that were covered in writing. He smacked them down on a table and ordered me to sign the confession and leave a thumbprint. I said, “I didn’t say any of this, so I’m not signing.” He gave the other officers a signal, and several of them rushed over, some pulled at my arms, and some squeezed my wrists really tight, making me open my fists, and then forced my entire palmprint onto that fake confession. Chief Zhu picked it up and said, very pleased, “Humph! Still trying to fight me? You think you can get away with not saying anything? I can still get you convicted and sentenced to eight to ten years!”

That evening the police took me to an abandoned factory and ordered me to take off my shoes and socks, so I was left barefoot. Then two stood next to me, each holding an arm, and took me through a dark corridor that just got darker the farther in we went. My hair was standing on end. They

took me past three iron gates and then tossed me into a room. I saw a man in a corner tied up with heavy chains, his hands and feet were splayed out, spread-eagled, and he was moaning weakly. There were lots of those thick chains hanging from the wall, and there were electric batons and iron bars. I felt like I'd fallen down into hell. I was terrified and felt like this time I was sure to die in there. I prayed to God over and over. Then an officer said threateningly, "If you hurry, there's still time for you to confess. Are you going to talk, or not?" I said, "I haven't broken any laws. I have nothing to confess." He sneered coldly, waved a hand, and then two other male officers leapt toward me like wolves, and quickly pressed me down onto the floor. I struggled furiously, but they kneeled firmly down on my legs and ripped off my shirt and pants while I desperately tried to resist. They tore all of my clothing, and finally left me lying face down and naked on the floor. After that, they kneeled on my thighs really hard and twisted my arms behind my back so that I couldn't move. Another officer got an electric baton and started shocking me like mad all over my waist, back and buttocks. Every shock left me swollen and numb, and the pain felt like it was drilling straight into my bones. I was shaking uncontrollably all over and my feet were thrashing against the ground. The more I struggled, the tighter they held me. One officer took advantage of the situation to grope my buttocks while laughing madly, and saying some vulgar things. Another officer yelled while administering electric shocks, "Are you going to talk, or what? I bet I can make you!" After electrocuting me five or six times, they turned me over, kneeled hard on my thighs again, and kept on shocking me in the chest, stomach, and groin. When they shocked me in the midsection it felt like my stomach and intestines were all being churned together—it was extremely painful. When shocking my chest, I felt my heart contract and I struggled to breathe. I felt like a handful of sharp nails

were suddenly being plunged into my flesh when they shocked me in the groin, and I lost my breath. Words simply cannot describe that kind of pain.

I fainted after that. I don't know how much time passed before they splashed me with cold water to wake me up, then continued shocking me. One of the officers even pinched my nipples, pulled up and then pushed down on them hard, doing this over and over for four or five minutes. I felt like my nipples were going to be twisted off—it was a really sharp pain. Another officer was shocking me in the breasts at the same time. With every shock, I felt like the flesh of my breasts was being peeled off, like my heart was going to stop beating. I was sweating all over and couldn't stop shaking. They kept on shocking me, toying with me, all the while saying revolting things. I felt like they were the evil spirits and devils in hell who specialize in torturing people for their own entertainment. Later, I was in so much pain that I ended up losing control of my bladder, and then fainted again. Some time passed, I don't know how long, before they woke me up with cold water again and kept shocking me in the chest, stomach, and groin. I felt like my flesh was being burned by all those shocks. One of the officers yelled while zapping me, "Where's your God now? Get Him to come save you! I'm your god!"

I fainted from the shocks over and over, and they splashed me to wake me up time and again. Finally, I didn't even have the strength left to struggle or move at all. I lay on the floor half-dead, feeling incredible sadness, anger and pain. I had no idea how much longer they were going to torment and abuse me. I truly couldn't take it anymore and I wanted to bite my own tongue off and kill myself to escape this misery sooner. Just when I was on the verge of collapse, I thought of this hymn: "Satan's ravaged me beyond belief. I've seen the devil's face. I can't forget eons of hatred. Best to die than bow down to Satan! God's become flesh just to save man,

suffering torment and humiliation. I've enjoyed so much of God's love, how could I rest without repaying it? As a human being, I must rise up, and give my life in witness to God. My body may break, yet my heart grows stronger. I will be loyal to God until death without any regrets. I'll submit even till death, if I can satisfy God just once." I thought of how God has become flesh and endured great humiliation just to save mankind, how He shares His words to water and sustain us. God has paid so much of a price for our sakes, and He had always been there guiding and protecting me since my arrest. I had enjoyed so much of God's grace, but what had I ever done for Him? Saints through the ages have been able to sacrifice themselves and shed their own blood, being martyred for God, but after experiencing a bit of suffering I already wanted to escape it through death. I was such a coward! How was this testimony to God? Wasn't I letting Satan laugh at me? At this thought, I silently prayed, "God, no matter how Satan tortures me, I'll never give in to it. I will live for You."

They kept shocking me over and over after that, and I kept my teeth gritted and didn't make a sound. After I passed out from being electrocuted for the last time, I found myself standing in a place where I could see a mountain shaped like the beak of an eagle in the distance, surrounded by withered trees, and dry and dead bamboo, flowers, and grass. Only the mountain was green. There were lots of people with dry, cracked lips climbing toward the mountain and some died of thirst on the way. I was also terribly parched, and when I got to the foot of the mountain, I heard the sound of water coming from it. I rushed to start climbing it and after struggling to get halfway up, I was able to lift my head and drink the water that was dripping down from the eagle's beak. It tasted so sweet! As I was drinking, I heard singing. I turned my head and saw two rows of people dressed all in white who were singing a hymn; they looked like angels.

These were the words of the song: **“The utmost faith and love are required from us in the work of the last days. We may stumble from the slightest carelessness, for this stage of work is different from all the previous ones: What God is perfecting is mankind’s faith, which is both invisible and intangible. What God does is convert words to faith, to love, and to life. People must reach a point where they have endured hundreds of refinements and possess faith greater than Job’s. They must endure incredible suffering and all manner of torture without ever leaving God. When they are submissive unto death, and have great faith in God, then this stage of God’s work is complete”** (The Word, Vol. 1.

The Appearance and Work of God. The Path ... (8)). The sound of the song was echoing in the valley—it was clear, melodious and beautiful. Listening to it was so enjoyable and inspiring for me. Then, I suddenly woke up. I was still in a lot of pain, but I felt peace in my heart. I saw an officer resting on a chair, exhausted and breathing heavily. Another officer said, “I’m impressed. This woman is made of iron—nothing can kill her.” I offered up my thanks and praise to God when I heard this. It was God enlightening and guiding me, allowing me to see this vision, giving me strength, and guiding me through this difficult time. My faith in God grew. Later on, one of the officers tossed my shirt and pants over to me and left, dejected. I had been weakened by the electric shocks and was in too much pain to sit up. With a great deal of effort, I was able to get my clothing on while lying on the floor, but my underwear was nowhere to be seen and they had torn my clothing. I could barely cover myself with it. I felt like I’d had a layer of skin taken off by the electrocution, and my clothing stuck painfully to my flesh. The wounds I’d gotten from being shocked took over a year to heal, and I was left with residual symptoms from it. Ever since that time, I often experience involuntary, full-body spasms, an inability to open my jaw and tightening of



my whole body. If it happens at night, I can't sleep well, and the next day I'm left exhausted and devoid of energy.

On the fifth day of my arrest, the police took me to a detention house. After five days without eating or drinking, my throat was too dry for me to swallow. The other prisoners brought me a mound of cold, dry rice, pried my mouth open with chopsticks and forced it into my mouth, yelling, "Hurry up and swallow it, just see what happens if you don't!" It felt like swallowing nails—my throat hurt so much that tears ran down my face. That sort of humiliation and bullying was routine in there. One day the head prisoner got a pair of scissors from somewhere, pinned me down on a stool, and asked a few other prisoners what sort of haircut I should get. One of them said, "She's religious, so give her a witch's haircut!" The head prisoner cut off my braids right away, and the others burst out laughing at the excitement of seeing my hair in such a mess. One of them said, "Give her a nun's hairdo!" The head prisoner cut off a large portion of my hair so that the scalp was showing, and the others burst into laughter again. This humiliation was awful for me, and I couldn't hold back my tears. I was unable to lift my arms and legs after being hung up by those handcuffs and electrocuted, and trying to walk really hurt my legs. But I still had to do daily exercises with all the others, lifting my legs up high and setting them down really hard, and making loud sounds. These movements were really painful every time. I was weak all over and devoid of strength and couldn't keep up with the rhythm, so the head prisoner would pinch my body, leaving bruises. It was particularly uncomfortable during my period. There wasn't any toilet paper, I didn't have any underwear, and the head prisoner had only given me one prison uniform, so my pants were stained with blood and I couldn't change them. The uniform fabric was also really coarse, so it became hard after the blood dried on it. The wounds where I'd been

shocked on my groin hadn't healed, so walking really hurt and every time we did exercises, the uniform would chafe on those wounds, which felt like being cut by a knife. The worst part was that without toilet paper, I had no choice but to use cold water to clean myself. I'd had a hemorrhaging condition before becoming a believer, and I was worried that it would recur because of the cold water. During those days, I felt like I really wouldn't make it. I didn't know when it would all be over, and I didn't want to stay another moment in that prison of demons. When my misery reached a certain point, I thought of death again. Realizing that my heart was straying from God, I said a prayer, asking God to guide me to overcome my situation. Then, one day, I remembered this passage of God's words: **"When you face suffering, you must be able to lay aside concern for the flesh and to not make complaints against God. When God hides Himself from you, you must be able to have the faith to follow Him, to maintain your previous love without allowing it to falter or dissipate. No matter what God does, you must submit to His design and be prepared to curse your own flesh rather than make complaints against Him. When you are faced with trials, you must satisfy God, though you may weep bitterly or feel reluctant to part with some beloved object. Only this is true love and faith"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Those Who Are to Be Made Perfect Must Undergo Refinement). Through God's words, I understood that He was allowing me to experience the great red dragon's persecution to test me, to see if I had true faith in Him. It made me think of Job and Peter. Job was attacked and tortured by Satan—he broke out in boils all over his body, making him terribly miserable, and he sat in a pile of ashes scraping his body with potsherds. Still, he didn't blame God, but praised His name. Peter was crucified upside-down for God and was able to submit until death, giving a resounding testimony. Both of them bore

witness to God in the midst of their suffering. Compared to them, I truly had too little faith. The more I thought about it, the more ashamed I felt, so I said a silent prayer: “Oh God, no matter the suffering, I want to follow You! The more the great red dragon tortures me, the more I want to lean on You and stand firm in my testimony and humiliate Satan!”

Then one day the police called my husband in. Seeing I’d been tortured to the point that I hardly even looked human, he started crying right there and said, “How can you stand this kind of torment? Chief Zhu has said that if you just tell them what you know, we can go home.” Seeing I still wouldn’t talk, Chief Zhu then called my daughter. She said, in tears, “Mom, where are you? The teachers and other kids at school are all saying that I’m the daughter of a cult leader. They’re all bullying me and ignoring me. I hide in the corner of the classroom every day, crying....” I pushed the phone away from my ear, truly unable to listen any further. It felt like a knife twisting in my heart and I couldn’t stop crying. Chief Zhu used this opportunity to say, “Just talk to us. Tell us one home that’s storing the church’s money, just one, and you can be reunited with your family.” I was feeling kind of weak at the moment. I thought that if I never said anything, my husband and daughter would be implicated too, so maybe I could share some information that wasn’t too important. Then I realized that this wasn’t in keeping with God’s intention, so I quickly said a prayer, asking for God to watch over my heart so I could triumph over this temptation from Satan. Then I thought of something God said: **“At all times, My people should be on guard against the cunning schemes of Satan, guarding the gate of My house for Me ... so as to avoid falling into Satan’s trap, at which time it would be too late for regrets”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. God’s Words to the Entire Universe, Chapter 3). The enlightenment of God’s words came just in time. I suddenly realized that Satan was trying to use my love

for my family to attack me, to get me to betray God. I couldn't fall for its trick—I couldn't sell out the brothers and sisters for my family. And then I remembered something else from God's words: **“You must suffer hardship for the truth, you must give yourself to the truth, you must endure humiliation for the truth, and to gain more of the truth you must undergo more suffering. This is what you should do. You must not throw away the truth for the sake of a peaceful family life, and you must not lose your life's dignity and integrity for the sake of momentary enjoyment. You should pursue all that is beautiful and good, and you should pursue a path in life that is more meaningful”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. The Experiences of Peter: His Knowledge of Chastisement and Judgment). When I pondered God's words, I felt a great deal of guilt and self-remorse. I thought of Job being tempted by Satan, losing his children and all of his possessions, and how he still didn't blame God. He maintained his faith in God and bore a wonderful and resounding witness to Him. But faced with the police's temptations, I had been willing to sell out the brothers and sisters and betray God to protect my family's interests. I was really lacking a conscience; I was so selfish and despicable, and hurtful to God. Every time I was in distress, God was there guiding and protecting me, giving me faith and strength with His words. His love for me is very real, and now that it was time for me to make a choice, I couldn't sell out the other church members for my husband and daughter. Everyone's fate in life is predestined by God, and my husband's and daughter's fates were in God's hands, Satan doesn't get to decide them. I knew I should entrust everything to God. When I thought about it that way, what my family was facing was no longer upsetting for me, and I felt determined to rebel against the flesh and to stand firm in my witness for God.

On the 28th day of my arrest, the police sent me and Guilan into a detention center, locking us up with prostitutes who had contracted sexually transmitted infections. That was a cell that even the police didn't want to come near. Some of the prisoners had sores all over their bodies and their skin was rotting off, and some had ulcers festering on their genitals that were unbearably painful for them; they covered themselves with filthy bedsheets, and bounced up and down on the concrete beds. There wasn't any medication available, so all they could do was use salt and toothpaste to alleviate the pain. Some of the underwear they had washed and laid outside to dry even had crabs crawling in and out of the seams. I thought to myself, "This is no place for humans; it is a pit of disease! How can I go on living if I get some sort of sexual disease, or AIDS while I am here?" Feeling kind of afraid, I prayed to God, asking Him to protect me and guide me. I thought of something He said after that: **"Of everything that occurs in the universe, there is nothing in which I do not have the final say. Is there anything that is not in My hands?"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. God's Words to the Entire Universe, Chapter 1). Yes, all things are in God's hands, and if He didn't allow it, I wouldn't contract any infections while living with these women; if I really did get infected, it would be something I needed to experience. These thoughts quelled my fear and I became able to calmly face the situation. For the next six months, although I was sleeping and eating alongside those other prisoners, I didn't get any infections thanks to God's protection.

While in the detention center, the police assigned a couple of spies to worm their way close to me and obtain information on the church. Not long after being put into the detention center, another prisoner started trying to ingratiate herself with me, saying she also wanted to be a believer, and that she really admired those who are leaders or workers in the church before

asking me if I was a leader. At that point my guard went up immediately and I hurried to change the subject. After that, every time she brought up something about belief in God I would shift the conversation, so she didn't get anything out of me. It wasn't long before she left the detention center. A little while after that, when I was passing the men's cells one day, one of the male prisoners threw me a piece of paper. It said he had been arrested for sharing the gospel and was sentenced to 1.5 years. He also said that he hoped we could help each other out, and he wanted me to respond to his letter. I was wondering if he really was a believer. As I was hesitating about whether to respond to his letter or not, something from God's words suddenly came to mind: **"You must be awake and waiting at all times, and you must pray before Me more. You must recognize the various plots and cunning schemes of Satan, recognize the spirits, know people, and be able to discern all kinds of people, events, and things"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Utterances of Christ in the Beginning, Chapter 17). God's words were an immediate wake-up call for me. Could this be one of Satan's schemes? At the time I really wasn't able to see through it, so I prayed to God over and over, asking Him to reveal it. About a week later when all the prisoners were gathered in the courtyard, I happened to see that man. Seeing his head wasn't shaved was confusing for me—all male prisoners have to shave their heads when they're sentenced, so why did he still have his hair? Just as I was pondering this, a female prisoner next to me tapped me and pointed at him, and said in a very pleased tone, "That guy is a police official, he paid for my services a while back." I realized right away that he was a cop, and he was trying to get close to me to get a confession out of me. I saw that the great red dragon really does have all sorts of schemes—it is so vile and detestable! I gave thanks to God in my

heart for His protection, which had allowed me to see through Satan's tricks time after time, and stopped me from falling for them.

In January 2007, the police sent me to a labor camp with Guilan and three others who had been convicted of drug offenses. I will never forget the humiliation I experienced that day. When we arrived, it happened to be midday and some light snow was falling; hundreds of other prisoners were in the courtyard of the labor camp lining up for a meal. The police officers walked over to us with a dark look on their faces and told the drug offenders to go get some food, leaving just Guilan and me there. They then ordered us to remove all of our clothing. I wondered if they were going to search us, with all those other prisoners there watching. When I wouldn't take off my clothing, a couple of officers pounced on us and forcibly removed all the clothing off both me and Guilan. For me, being stripped completely naked in front of all those people was even worse than if they had just killed me. Row after row of eyes were all fixed on us, and I kept my head down, hugged my chest, and squatted down. An officer dragged me back up and yelled at me to put my hands behind my head, stand with my legs apart, face all the prisoners, and do squats. Guilan had to do the same thing, and I could see that her entire body was trembling. She had already gotten so thin she was just skin and bones, and she had some scars on her body—she must have been tortured a lot too. The police pointed at us and shouted to the others, "These two believe in Almighty God. If any of you become believers, you'll end up just like them!" This set off lots of discussion among the prisoners, and some of them said mockingly, "Why doesn't your God come save you?" We had to keep doing squats in front of hundreds of people like this for about 10 minutes. I'd never suffered such humiliation before, and I couldn't stop crying. If there had been a wall there, I would have wanted to smash my head against it to end my life.

Then I remembered one of the church hymns: “Satan the demon king is utterly cruel, truly shameless and despicable. I see clearly Satan’s demonic countenance, and my heart loves Christ even more. I will never drag out an ignoble existence by bending the knee to Satan and betray God. I will suffer through all hardships and pain, and endure through the darkest of nights. To bring God’s heart comfort, I will bear victorious witness” (Follow the Lamb and Sing New Songs, Rising Up Amidst Darkness and Oppression). Thinking over these hymn lyrics, I thought of the Lord Jesus being crucified—the Roman soldiers beat Him, humiliated Him, and spit on His face. God is holy, so He shouldn’t endure that kind of suffering, but He bore the ultimate pain and humiliation to save humanity, and was finally nailed to the cross for us. He withstood incredible indignity and suffering. But as a corrupt human being, I wanted to die when I was humiliated and I didn’t have any testimony. I was being humiliated by demons and Satan for following God—this was persecution for the sake of righteousness, and was a thing of glory! The more the Communist Party humiliated and persecuted me, the more I could see how despicable and vile it is, and the more I could reject and rebel against it, and keep my resolve to stand firm in my witness for God.

After that a couple of prison guards brought us over to stand by a staircase, and at that time two other prisoners rushed down and started punching and kicking us, grabbed me by the hair and slammed my head into the wall, leaving my ears ringing. Pretty soon I couldn’t hear anything and I felt like my head had been split open. Guilan was bleeding from the eyes, nose, mouth, and ears. After the beating, the prisoners dragged us out to a balcony to make us stand still there as a punishment. It was snowing heavily then, there was a cold wind blowing, and nighttime temperatures were dropping to seven or eight degrees below freezing. We were only wearing long underwear, so we were shivering with the cold. When it got to



the point that I really couldn't take it anymore and wanted to change my posture, I slightly shifted my feet, and the prisoners came over as though they were about to hit me. The next day, my whole body was in pain from the cold and it felt like my heart was about to give out. There were also sharp pains in my feet. That feeling was worse than death itself, and every single minute was difficult to endure. When the pain got to a certain extreme, I really wanted to jump off the balcony and end my life. But then I immediately realized that thinking like that was not in accordance with God's intention, so I rushed to call out to Him, "God, I almost can't hold on any longer. I really can't take it anymore—please give me faith so that I can withstand this suffering." After my prayer, I thought of a hymn of God's words titled **"Seek to Love God No Matter How Great Your Suffering"**: **"During these last days you must bear testimony to God. No matter how great your suffering, you should walk until the very end, and even at your last breath, still you must be faithful to God and at the mercy of God; only this is truly loving God, and only this is the strong and resounding testimony"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Only by Experiencing Painful Trials Can You Know the Loveliness of God). I realized that God was always guiding me, caring for me, and watching over me. When I thought about the torment and humiliation I'd experienced, I realized that if it hadn't been for God's guidance or the faith and strength given to me by His words, I couldn't have gotten through the abuse of those demons. God had shown me how to live to that day, and He hoped that I could bear witness for Him before Satan. But now, in order to save myself a little physical hardship, I wanted to end my life. I was so weak. How was this testimony to God? Wouldn't dying mean that I'd fallen prey to Satan's schemes? I couldn't die, I had to stand firm in my testimony and bring shame to Satan.

When I thought about it that way, before I knew it, I didn't feel cold anymore, and was warm all over.

The head prisoner didn't allow us to stop standing until the afternoon of the third day. Both Guilan's and my legs were incredibly swollen and it felt like the blood had solidified in them. Blood vessels were visible all over our legs and our feet were really painful, but I still gave thanks to God. In the cold, snowy weather, Guilan and I had been standing on the balcony for two days and two nights without anything to eat or drink, but we didn't freeze to death or even catch a cold. This was God's protection.

During my time in the labor camp, every day I had to withstand over a dozen hours, or even up to 22 hours of hard labor, and I was often beaten and punished by the head prisoner because I failed to complete my tasks. But God continued to enlighten and guide me, allowing me to get through a year and a half of hellish prison life. God was by my side the entire time, watching over and protecting me. I was tortured and humiliated many times, to the point that I wanted to end my life, and it was God's words that gave me faith and strength, guiding me through every storm. God has given me this life! By experiencing the great red dragon's oppression I have learned that the only thing we can truly rely on is God; only He really loves mankind, and only He can save us from Satan's corruption and devastation, and lead us to live in the light. I give thanks to God!

## **8. Lessons Learned From the Allocation of Churches**

By Reese, USA

In early 2021, with a number of new churches being established, the leader decided to reallocate churches among co-workers and myself. I didn't have an opinion about this at first, but when I learned more about the situation I saw that I would be overseeing some of the more problematic churches, where members were not yet established in the faith and leaders and deacons were still being selected. The churches that Sister Lilly was taking charge of, however, were doing a lot better than mine. They had new believers of good caliber, who were fairly well established, and had responsible leaders and deacons. I couldn't help but envy her. I was wondering why the better churches went to her, while mine were full of problems. It was going to cost me so much effort! If I couldn't get things up and running, what would the leader think of me? Would she say I had no aptitude and couldn't get anything done? She certainly wouldn't think much of me. I felt really disaffected. Later, whenever I attended those churches' gatherings, there were multiple problems and they took a lot of time to deal with. This meant I wasn't getting much downtime, and I was struggling in my duty. I was thinking that a task Lilly could take care of in an hour was taking me two or three hours. My own caliber and skills were limited to begin with, but these churches had so many problems. If I wasn't making noticeable progress in spite of all the time and effort I was putting in, then when the leader came to compare my results to Lilly's she was bound to feel I was mediocre, and that I wasn't doing well and didn't match up to Lilly. I was in a pretty bad state during those days and felt vexed and aggrieved whenever problems came up. I was tired, both physically and

emotionally. So, I came before God to pray and seek, saying, “God, I know You’ve allowed this allocation of work responsibilities and I should submit to Your orchestrations, but I still feel resistant. Please enlighten me to understand Your intentions and my own corruption.”

Later, I saw God’s words: **“If you have learned much and been given much by God, you should be given a heavier burden—not to make life difficult for you, but because it is an exact fit for you. It is your duty, so don’t try to pick and choose, or say no, or try to get out of it. Why do you think it is hard? The fact is that if you put some heart into it, you would be entirely up to the task. Your thinking that it is hard, that it is biased treatment, that you are being deliberately picked on—that is the revelation of a corrupt disposition. It is refusal to do your duty, not accepting from God. That is not practicing the truth. When you pick and choose in performing your duty, doing whatever is light and easy, only doing what makes you look good, this is a corrupt satanic disposition. That you cannot accept your duty or submit proves that you are still rebellious toward God, that you are opposing, refusing, and avoiding Him. This is a corrupt disposition. When you come to know that this is a corrupt disposition, what should you do? If you feel that the tasks given to others can be completed easily while those given to you keep you busy for a long time and require you to put effort into research, and this makes you unhappy, is it right of you to feel unhappy? Certainly not. So, what should you do when you sense that this is not right? If you are resistant and say, ‘Every time they mete out jobs, they give me the ones that are hard, dirty, and demanding, and give others the ones that are light, simple, and high-profile. Do they think I’m just someone they can push around? This isn’t a fair way to distribute jobs!’—if that is your thinking, it’s wrong.**

**Irrespective of whether there are any deviations in the distribution of jobs, or whether they are distributed reasonably or not, what is it that God scrutinizes? What He scrutinizes is a person's heart. He looks at whether someone has submission in their hearts, if they can take on some burdens for God, and if they are a lover of God. As measured by God's requirements, your excuses are invalid, your performance of your duty is not up to standard, and you lack the truth reality. You have no submission at all, and you complain when you do a few demanding or dirty tasks. What is the problem here? First of all, your mentality is wrong. What does that mean? It means that your attitude toward your duty is wrong. If you are always thinking of your own pride and interests, and are inconsiderate of God's intentions, and have no submission at all, then that is not the correct attitude you should have toward your duty. If you expended sincerely for God and had a God-loving heart, how would you treat tasks that are dirty, demanding, or hard? Your mentality would be different: You would choose to do whatever is difficult and seek out heavy burdens to shoulder. You would take up what other people are unwilling to do, and you would do it solely for the love of God and to satisfy Him. You would be filled with joy to do so, without any hint of complaints"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Part Three). Reading God's words, I reflected on what I'd shown of myself over the previous few days. Seeing how the members of the churches I'd taken on didn't have much grounding, with few of them ready to perform a duty, I felt really resistant. Leaders and deacons hadn't been selected for all the posts, and the various projects were hard to manage. It required time and energy to sort them out, but still things might not turn out well, which wouldn't look good for me. I just wanted to manage good churches where I didn't have to worry and could get results

more easily, so that others would think highly of me. I kept thinking it wasn't fair the way the work had been reallocated; that Lilly got an easy job that would make her look good while I got a job that was hard and tiring, and where I couldn't stand out. I felt resistant about this and didn't want to simply submit. Through the revelation of God's words I saw that I was being finicky, and objecting to a duty that didn't benefit me. I was rejecting duty and not being remotely submissive. I'd always thought I was conscientious and responsible in my duty, and never expected to be shown up in that way. I saw I was bringing the wrong intentions and perspectives to my duty. Instead of submitting to God and repaying His love, I wanted admiration and praise from others. Approaching my duty in that way was abhorrent to God.

I found a passage from God's word: **"If you wish to give all your loyalty in all things to satisfy God's intentions, you cannot do it by just performing one duty; you must accept any commission God bestows upon you. Whether it is to your tastes and matches your interests, or is something you do not enjoy, have never done before, or is difficult, you should still accept it and submit. Not only must you accept it, but you must also proactively cooperate, and learn about it, while experiencing and entering. Even if you suffer hardship, are tired, humiliated, or are ostracized, you must still give it all your loyalty. Only by practicing in this way will you be able to give all your loyalty in all things and satisfy God's intentions. You must regard it as your duty to perform, not as personal business. How should you understand duties? As something that the Creator—God—gives someone to do; this is how people's duties come about. The commission that God gives you is your duty, and it is perfectly natural and justified that you perform your duty as God demands. If it is clear to you that this duty is God's commission,**

and that this is God's love and God's blessing coming upon you, then you will be able to accept your duty with a God-loving heart, and you will be able to be considerate of God's intentions as you perform your duty, and you will be able to overcome all difficulties to satisfy God. Those who truly expend themselves for God could never refuse God's commission; they could never refuse any duty. No matter what duty God entrusts you with, regardless of what difficulties it entails, you should not refuse it, but accept it. This is the path of practice, which is to practice the truth and give all your loyalty in all things, in order to satisfy God. What is the focus here? It is on the words 'in all things.' 'All things' does not necessarily mean things that you like or are good at, much less things with which you are familiar. Sometimes they will be things you are not good at, things you need to learn, things which are difficult, or things where you must suffer. However, regardless of what thing it is, as long as God has entrusted you with it, you must accept it from Him; you must accept it and perform the duty well, giving it all your loyalty and satisfying God's intentions. This is the path of practice. No matter what happens, you must always seek the truth, and once you are certain what sort of practice is in line with God's intentions, that is how you should practice. Only by doing this are you practicing the truth, and only in this way can you enter the **truth reality**" (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Part Three). A duty is God's commission for us and it's our responsibility and obligation. No matter how hard it is, or whether it brings any glory, we are obligated to accept it. That's the way we should approach our duty, and it's the sense that a created being should have before God. The churches I now managed weren't what I wanted and my desire for status wouldn't be met, but I needed to accept this commission from God and stop approaching my duty

from the wrong perspective. So, I came before God to pray, wanting to submit to His orchestrations, to do everything I could in my duty, to water new believers properly and to help them soon establish themselves on the true way. I felt more composed, after praying, and was no longer so vexed by the issues of work reallocation.

With the spread of the gospel, and more and more churches opening up, the leader once again reallocated our responsibilities. From the churches within my remit, one that was doing a little better than others, and a sister who was doing well in her watering work, were assigned to other co-workers. I was upset and displeased about this. I felt like they understood my situation well, that I'd taken on the churches with the most problems and I'd already been working really hard. I finally had a watering sister who was doing well, and now she was being taken away. How could I ever have anything to show for my work? What would everyone think of me if I kept having poor results? They'd think I was inept and couldn't get things done. That would be awful! How could I show my face in co-worker meetings after that? Turning this over in my mind brought me to tears. I realized I was feeling disaffected and disobedient toward work reallocation again. Right away I prayed to God and reflected on myself. Then I read a passage of God's words: **"Regardless of what work they undertake, antichrists never give any thought to the interests of the house of God. They only consider whether their own interests will be affected, only think about the little bit of work in front of them that benefits them. For them, the primary work of the church is just something they do in their spare time. They don't take it seriously at all. They only move when they're prodded into action, only do what they like to do, and only do work that is for the sake of maintaining their own status and power. In their eyes, any work arranged by God's house, the work of spreading the**



**gospel, and the life entry of God's chosen people are not important. ... no matter what duty antichrists are doing, all they think about is whether it will allow them to step into the limelight; as long as it will boost their reputation, they rack their brains to come up with a way to learn how to do it, to carry it out; all they care about is whether it will set them apart. No matter what they do or think, they are only concerned with their own fame, gain, and status. No matter what duty they are doing, they only compete over who is higher or lower, who wins and who loses, who has the bigger reputation. They only care about how many people worship and look up to them, how many people obey them, and how many followers they have. They never fellowship the truth or solve real problems. They never consider how to do things according to principle when doing their duty, nor do they reflect on whether they have been loyal, have fulfilled their responsibilities, whether there have been deviations or oversights in their work, or if any problems exist, much less do they give thought to what God asks, and what God's intentions are. They pay not the slightest attention to all these things. They only put their head down and do things for the sake of fame, gain, and status, to satisfy their own ambitions and desires. This is the manifestation of selfishness and vileness, is it not? This fully exposes how their hearts brim with their own ambitions, desires, and senseless demands; everything they do is governed by their ambitions and desires. No matter what they do, the motivation and source is their own ambitions, desires, and senseless demands. This is the archetypal manifestation of selfishness and vileness"** (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Excursus Four: Summarizing the Character of Antichrists and Their Disposition Essence (Part One)). God's words talk about how selfish and vile antichrists are, that they have their own ambitions and

desires in their duty, and that their primary concern is always to protect their own interests. No matter what duty they do, they never think about how to be mindful of God's intentions, or how to do their duty well, or how to make sure the work of the church doesn't suffer. They think only about prestige and status, with no regard for the interests of the church. As for what I revealed, the first thing on my mind on seeing how many issues there were with the churches under my care, was how dreadful it would be to have others look down on me for getting poor outcomes, rather than thinking about how to lean on God and do my best to support those churches. I was resistant and indignant about how the work had been reallocated, and even eased off in doing my duty. When I learned that a capable sister in my area of work was being transferred to another church, my first reaction was that I was now short of a strong partner and results would slip, causing the leader to think I wasn't up to the job. All I thought about was protecting my own reputation and interests, and how I could skate by without too much effort while still making a good impression and earning admiration. I wasn't looking at the big picture of the church's work. I was selfish and vile, and this betrayed in me the disposition of an antichrist. Really thinking about it, I knew that there was God's intention behind my being put in charge of the more challenging churches. These difficulties—churches with multiple problems, and newcomers who weren't yet established—required me to lean more on God and seek truth to resolve them. I also had to pay more of a price to support and water the newcomers so that they'd quickly come to know the truth of God's work and have a grounding in the true way. It was good practice for me. And the harder things got, the more it forced me to seek the truth and find solutions, and in this way I could end up picking up lots of truths. It was good for my life entry. Then I realized that this duty wasn't anyone trying to make things

hard for me. It had God's approval and was beneficial. I needed to accept it and submit, and put my heart into it. This realization helped change my attitude, and I didn't feel so bad about things.

After that, I read another passage of God's words that helped me understand my problem better. Almighty God says: **"If someone says they love the truth and that they pursue the truth, but in essence, the goal they pursue is to distinguish themselves, to show off, to make people think highly of them, to achieve their own interests, and the performing of their duty is not to submit to or satisfy God, and instead is to achieve fame, gain, and status, then their pursuit is illegitimate. That being the case, when it comes to the work of the church, are their actions an obstacle, or do they help move it forward? They are clearly an obstacle; they do not move it forward. Some people wave the banner of doing the work of the church yet pursue their own personal fame, gain, and status, run their own operation, create their own little group, their own little kingdom—is this kind of person doing their duty? All the work they do essentially disrupts, disturbs, and impairs the work of the church. What is the consequence of their pursuit of fame, gain, and status? First, this affects how God's chosen people eat and drink God's word normally and understand the truth, it hinders their life entry, stops them from entering the right track of faith in God, and leads them onto the wrong path—which harms the chosen ones, and brings them to ruin. And what does it ultimately do to the work of the church? It is disturbance, impairment, and dismantlement. This is the consequence brought about by people's pursuit of fame, gain, and status. When they do their duty in this way, can this not be defined as walking the path of an antichrist? When God asks that people put aside fame, gain, and status, it is not that He is depriving people of the right**

to choose; rather, it is because, while pursuing fame, gain, and status, people disrupt and disturb the work of the church and the life entry of God's chosen people, and can even have an influence on more people's eating and drinking God's words, understanding the truth, and thus achieving God's salvation. This is an indisputable fact. When people pursue their own fame, gain, and status, it is certain that they will not pursue the truth and that they will not faithfully fulfill their duty. They will only speak and act for the sake of fame, gain, and status, and all the work they do, without the least exception, is for those things' sake. To behave and act in such a way is, without question, to walk the path of antichrists; it is a disruption and disturbance of God's work, and all its various consequences are hindering the spread of the kingdom gospel and the carrying out of God's will within the church. So, one may say with certainty that the path walked by those who pursue fame, gain, and status is the path of resistance against God. It is intentional resistance against Him, naysaying Him—it is to cooperate with Satan in resisting God and standing in opposition to Him. This is the nature of people's pursuit of fame, gain, and status. The problem with people pursuing their own interests is that the goals they pursue are the goals of Satan—they are goals that are wicked and unjust. When people pursue personal interests such as fame, gain, and status, they unwittingly become a tool of Satan, they become an outlet for Satan, and, moreover, they become an embodiment of Satan. They play a negative role in the church; toward the work of the church, and toward the normal church life and normal pursuit of God's chosen people, the effect they have is to disturb and impair; they have an adverse and negative effect. When someone pursues the truth, they are able to be considerate of God's intentions and His burden. When they do their

**duty, they uphold the work of the church in every regard. They are able to exalt God and testify to God, they bring benefit to the brothers and sisters, and support them, and provide for them, and God gains glory and testimony, which brings shame upon Satan. As a result of their pursuit, God gains a created being that is truly capable of fearing God and shunning evil, that is able to worship God. As a result of their pursuit, too, God's will is carried out, and the work of God is able to progress. In the eyes of God, such pursuit is positive, it is aboveboard. Such pursuit is of tremendous benefit to God's chosen ones, as well as being wholly beneficial to the work of the church, it helps push things forward, and is approved by God"** (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Nine (Part One)).

God's words helped me better understand my pursuit of self-interest. I realized that when people pursue self-interest they're acting on behalf of Satan, becoming a tool for it to disrupt the church's work. Before then, I'd thought it was only by doing things that were obviously evil, like clearly obstructing church work and life, that one would be acting as a minion of Satan. But now I saw that just pursuing selfish interests in our duty and disregarding the church's interests, negatively impacts the work of the church by obstructing and disrupting it. I thought about how I'd exposed myself in doing my duty. Even though it appeared that I never slacked, that I could endure suffering and work all hours, and that I never did anything clearly disruptive, my intention was wrong. I wasn't doing a good job to satisfy God, but rather to distinguish myself and be admired. When I was displeased about the churches allocated to me, I became negative and slacked off. I couldn't just submit and think about how best to get on with doing my duty, or how I could promptly support the brothers and sisters. Unwittingly, I'd already hindered our watering work. The truth was that I had more experience than my co-workers. Some of the other sisters were

new to the job and were unfamiliar with much of the church's work, so it was right—from the overall perspective of the church—to assign better churches and personnel to them. But I was being selfish, wanting the better churches and personnel to remain under my remit. Doing things the way I wanted, however, by allocating problematic churches to newer co-workers, would have impacted our work and reduced efficiency, and that would have been to the church's detriment overall. My churches had more issues, but this was actually good training for me. By putting in just more effort I could get some good work done, to the benefit of our overall efficiency. Wasn't that the best arrangement? At this, I realized how my selfish, despicable mindset had been exposed by the matter of reallocating churches. I saw that involving self-interest in my duty could only disrupt the work of the church. I thought of how, in the past, I'd transgressed by going after prestige and status, and by protecting my personal interests. If I didn't make a change and kept stubbornly serving my own interests, I knew I'd once again disrupt the work of the church and would be spurned by God. This realization scared me. I prayed to God, repenting: "God, in my duty I've done nothing but protect my own interests without any thought for the overall work of the church or being mindful of Your intentions. With humanity like mine, I'm not worthy of taking on a duty. God, I want to truly repent."

I found a path of practice in God's words after that: **"For all who perform a duty, no matter how profound or shallow their understanding of the truth is, the simplest way to practice entering into the truth reality is to think of the interests of God's house in everything, and to let go of one's selfish desires, personal intents, motives, pride, and status. Put the interests of God's house first—this is the least one should do. If a person who performs a duty cannot even do this much, then how can they be said to be performing their duty?"**

**That is not performing one's duty. You should first think of the interests of God's house, be considerate of God's intentions, and consider the work of the church. Put these things first and foremost; only after that can you think about the stability of your status or how others regard you. Do you not feel that this becomes a little easier when you divide it into two steps and make some compromises? If you practice like this for a while, you will come to feel that satisfying God is not such a difficult thing. Furthermore, you should be able to fulfill your responsibilities, perform your obligations and duty, and set aside your selfish desires, intents, and motives; you should show consideration for God's intentions, and put the interests of God's house, the work of the church, and the duty that you are supposed to perform first. After experiencing this for a while, you will feel that this is a good way to comport yourself. It is living straightforwardly and honestly, and not being a base, vile person; it is living justly and honorably rather than being despicable, base, and a good-for-nothing. You will feel that this is how a person should act and the image that they should live out. Gradually, your desire to satisfy your own interests will lessen"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Freedom and Liberation Can Be Gained Only by Casting Off One's Corrupt Disposition). Reading God's words taught me that the interests of the church, not personal benefit, have to come first in everything. Reputation and status are temporary, and pursuing those things is meaningless. The only way to earn God's approval is to not live with a corrupt disposition, to practice the truth, and to satisfy God's intentions. Understanding this was enlightening for me. No matter how responsibilities were allocated, I couldn't keep considering my personal interests and protecting my reputation and status. I had to submit, and do my duty well. I had to focus on living before God and accepting His

scrutiny. No matter what others might think of me, I should put my heart into my duty and fulfill my responsibilities. This was in line with God's intentions.

In the days that followed, I threw myself into my duty, not thinking of my own interests. By doing that, I felt like I wasn't so constrained and influenced by my corrupt disposition. One day, when a sister was discussing work with me, she said her spoken English wasn't that great and she needed an interpreter when she checked in on one of her churches, so she was struggling and the work was being affected. Since my English was okay, I thought maybe we could switch and I could take charge of that church. Right away, however, it occurred to me that hers was a church with lots of issues, and that taking it on would probably involve a lot of effort for little progress. And then what would people think of me? Better not to switch, I thought. But then I realized I was being calculating again, thinking of my own pride and status, so I prayed to God, ready to rebel against myself. I knew I couldn't keep living in corruption, thinking only of my own interests like before. If this change would benefit the work of the church, then I had to do it. Afterward, I gave some thought to the remits of other co-workers and concluded it really was best for me to switch with that sister. I shared my thoughts with the leader and after giving the matter some consideration, she and the other co-workers agreed. I was at ease after we made the necessary changes, and felt an inexpressible sense of gladness. Just as God says: **"You should be able to fulfill your responsibilities, perform your obligations and duty, and set aside your selfish desires, intents, and motives; you should show consideration for God's intentions, and put the interests of God's house, the work of the church, and the duty that you are supposed to perform first. After experiencing this for a while, you will feel that this is a good way to comport yourself. It is living**



**straightforwardly and honestly, and not being a base, vile person; it is living justly and honorably rather than being despicable, base, and a good-for-nothing. You will feel that this is how a person should act and the image that they should live out”** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Freedom and Liberation Can Be Gained Only by Casting Off One’s Corrupt Disposition).

After that, I stopped being negative about the churches I was in charge of, and did my best to take care of every church’s work. When waterers complained about their work struggles, I fellowshipped with them on God’s words to correct their wrong perspectives, leaning on God and seeking truth together to tackle those difficulties. When I saw that there were plenty of issues with newcomers, and that some of them weren’t attending gatherings normally, I stopped complaining about the work and instead made a point of talking personally with the brothers and sisters to get an understanding of their struggles, and fellowshipping with them on God’s words. As for not having enough leaders and deacons in place, I did more work on cultivating talented individuals. I fellowshipped with brothers and sisters who had the caliber to take on those roles, on the significance and principles of performing a duty, and spent time working alongside them. When I noticed some fairly complicated tasks in the churches were being neglected, I stepped forward to take them on. I didn’t know at that point whether I could do a good job with those tasks, but I knew in my heart that I couldn’t just leave things as they stood. Instead of just selfishly considering my own remit, I had to be mindful of God’s will and uphold the overall work of the church. After a while there was progress in the work, and leaders and deacons were selected for all the churches I was managing. Twice as many people as before were taking on a duty, and some of the newly cultivated members were able to handle remits of their own. In churches that hadn’t been doing too well before, things were looking up in every aspect of work.

I could really see God's hand at work. I also truly experienced that what God wants from people is heart and obedience, so if we can be mindful of His intentions and think only of the work of the church, rather than our own interests, then we can obtain God's guidance. Understanding this strengthened my faith in God. Thanks be to Almighty God!

## 9. Truth Can't Be Gained in Religion

By Millie, Taiwan

I followed my parents in believing in the Lord as a child, and pursued my belief zealously. I actively took part in all church activities, no matter what they were. I gave a tenth of my income as a tithe, and I always joined in church ministry. Because of this, I became a church deacon, and at 30, I became a church elder. But even after many years of belief, there was something that always bothered me. I saw the words of the Lord Jesus: **“Not every one that said to Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that follows the will of My Father which is in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, and in Your name have cast out devils, and in Your name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess to them, I never knew you: depart from Me, you that work iniquity”** (Matthew 7:21–23). This confused me. Weren't we the people who preached and worked in the name of the Lord, and who called out “Lord, Lord”? Why did the Lord say He does not know such people, and say that such people are evildoers? Was it not His intention for us to work hard for Him in this way? Then what was the Lord's intention? I was never able to find an answer.

One day in March of 2020, a sister invited me to listen to a sermon online. I thought, “We can't go to church during the pandemic, so it'll be good to listen.” I happily agreed to do it. In that online gathering, Sister Maureen fellowshiped about what is meant by wise and foolish virgins, what Christ is, whether the kingdom of heaven is in heaven or on earth, and so on. I thought she spoke about these things very well. These were all issues I couldn't fellowship about clearly in my sermons, so her fellowship was very appealing to me. She also said, “We believers in the Lord all hope

to enter the kingdom of heaven, but what kind of people can enter it?” Then she read these Bible verses: **“Not every one that said to Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that follows the will of My Father which is in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, and in Your name have cast out devils, and in Your name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess to them, I never knew you: depart from Me, you that work iniquity”** (Matthew 7:21–23). She said, “The Lord says not all believers can enter the kingdom of heaven. Only those who follow God’s will can enter. So what does it mean to follow God’s will? Many people think that as long as they do more ministry, read the Bible, pray, and do many good deeds, they are following God’s will, and when the Lord returns, they will enter the kingdom. Is this view correct? Is it in line with God’s intention? The Pharisees of Judaism traveled all over the land and sea to win a single convert, and did many good deeds, but when the Lord Jesus came and expressed so many truths, they didn’t recognize Him as the Lord. They frantically resisted and condemned Him, and even nailed Him to the cross, becoming evildoers in the end. From this, we can see that following the heavenly Father’s will is not merely preaching the gospel, reading the Bible, praying, and doing good deeds, as we imagine. This is just one aspect of what a Christian should do. So what exactly does it mean to follow the heavenly Father’s will? The Bible says: **‘You shall therefore be holy, for I am holy’** (Leviticus 11:45). **‘Without holiness no man shall see the Lord’** (Hebrews 12:14). From this, we can see that God’s requirement for people is to achieve holiness and be free from sin. This means to be able to submit to God, to listen to His words, to no longer sin, resist, or betray Him, and to be able to submit to and accept His work even when it is inconsistent with human notions. Only this kind of person follows God’s will, and will

remain in God's kingdom. Although we believe in the Lord, and we forsake and expend for Him, we often lie and sin, there is often jealousy and strife among co-workers. When we face disasters and illnesses, we still complain about, judge, and even betray God. Is this really following God's will?" After she fellowshiped, I had a sudden revelation: Following God's will isn't about how outwardly busy we are, it depends on whether we listen to His words, submit to Him, and stop sinning and resisting Him. But we still sin often, we live in a state of sinning by day and confessing at night. We have not escaped from sin and can't practice God's word, and when something unsatisfactory happens, we resent and complain about the Lord. We are not following God's will at all.

After that, Maureen would share some words with me at every gathering. I thought these words were good and fresh, and sounded so bright. Gradually, I began to love gatherings like this, and I always looked forward to the next one. This was the moment I discovered that the sermons I once preached, as well as many pastors' sermons, were simply words and doctrines that we used to encourage people. In all honesty, we had no understanding of God and the truth at all. But when I met with brothers and sisters online and listened to their fellowship, I really enjoyed it and felt provided for, as well as feeling freedom and release. I could ask questions if I didn't understand the Scripture or if I didn't know something, and I always found answers there. I'd never gained this much at my church gatherings.

During one gathering, Maureen sent a passage for me to read: **"I was once known as Jehovah. I was also called the Messiah, and people once called Me Jesus the Savior with love and esteem. Today, however, I am no longer the Jehovah or Jesus that people knew in times past; I am the God who has returned in the last days, the God who shall bring the age**

to an end. I am the God Himself that rises up from the end of the earth, replete with My entire disposition, and full of authority, honor, and glory. People have never engaged with Me, never known Me, and have always been ignorant of My disposition. From the creation of the world until today, not one person has seen Me. This is the God who appears to man in the last days but is hidden among man. He resides among man, true and real, like the burning sun and the blazing flame, filled with power and brimming with authority. There is not a single person or thing that shall not be judged by My words, and not a single person or thing that shall not be purified through the burning of fire. Eventually, all nations shall be blessed because of My words, and also smashed to pieces because of My words. In this way, all people during the last days shall see that I am the Savior returned, and that I am the Almighty God that conquers all of mankind. And all shall see that I was once the sin offering for man, but that in the last days I also become the flames of the sun that incinerate all things, as well as the Sun of righteousness that reveals all things. This is My work in the last days. I took this name and am possessed of this disposition so that all people may see that I am a righteous God, the burning sun, the blazing flame, and so that all may worship Me, the one true God, and so that they may see My true face: I am not only the God of the Israelites, and I am not just the Redeemer; I am the God of all creatures throughout the heavens and the earth and the seas” (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. The Savior Has Already Returned Upon a “White Cloud”). After I read this passage, Maureen asked me, “Who do you think said this?” I quickly read it again to myself. I felt these words had authority and power, and from the words “**I am the Almighty God that conquers all of mankind,**” I sensed the majesty of God. I was certain God had spoken these words, because no human could

say such things. No famous person, great man, or religious leader could say such words. I said to Maureen, “Clearly, God said this, because only God Himself knows what God is going to do, and no person would dare say: **‘I was once known as Jehovah. I was also called the Messiah, and people once called Me Jesus the Savior with love and esteem.’**” After she heard my answer, she said excitedly, “Amen! This is the voice of God! Those who can recognize God’s voice are wise virgins and are blessed.” I had never read these words in the Bible, so I was curious where these words had come from. This was when she told me that the Lord Jesus had returned as Almighty God, the Savior. Almighty God had already opened the scroll and broken the seven seals, these words were from the scroll, and they are the truth expressed by God in the last days. I was very excited when I heard this, and thought, “The scroll has been opened? Then I need to hurry up and read God’s word!” She continued her fellowship, “The Lord Jesus returns in the last days. He appears and works under the name ‘Almighty God.’ He has expressed many truths, and does the work of judgment beginning with the house of God, which is the work of thoroughly cleansing and saving people. Only if we accept the judgment and chastisement in God’s word can we cast off sin and corruption and be purified. Only then can we be saved, and enter the kingdom of heaven. God’s new name in the last days, Almighty God, fulfills the prophecies in Revelation: **‘I am Alpha and Omega, the Beginning and the Ending, ... which is, and which was, and which is to come, the Almighty’** (Revelation 1:8). **‘Alleluia: for the Lord God Almighty reigns’** (Revelation 19:6). Jehovah, Jesus, and Almighty God are the names of God. Although God has a different name in each era, He is one God and one Spirit.” Only after hearing her fellowship did I realize that God’s new name in the last days was prophesied long ago in Revelation, but I hadn’t noticed. I only knew that God was innately almighty. It never

occurred to me that “Almighty God” is the name God uses when He returns in the last days. I was very happy and excited. It turned out that God has already returned, and He is Almighty God! She also told me, “Almighty God appeared and started to work in 1991, 30 years ago. Almighty God expressed millions of words of truth, all publicly posted on the internet. Now His words have spread from East to West, to many countries in the world. More and more people hear God’s voice and accept Almighty God’s work in the last days. This completely fulfills the prophecy of the Lord Jesus: **‘As the lightning comes out of the east, and shines even to the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be’** (Matthew 24:27).” I was very surprised. It turned out that Eastern Lightning was the appearance and work of God. A few years ago, I read in the newspaper that Eastern Lightning testified the Lord’s return. But at that time, most pastors and elders condemned it, and didn’t let the believers listen to Eastern Lightning’s preaching, so I thought this wasn’t the true way. I didn’t seek and investigate it, and I certainly didn’t read Almighty God’s word. I never imagined that Almighty God is the returned Lord Jesus, and has appeared and been working for 30 years. I was a little anxious, and felt that I was very far behind, so I wanted to read more of God’s word. Through gathering and fellowshiping on God’s word with Maureen, after some time I came to understand something about why God has to come incarnate to work in the last days. I also learned how God uses His words to do the work of judgment, how we must experience this judgment to be cleansed and enter the kingdom of heaven, and more. Almighty God has revealed all these mysteries, and expressed so many truths, which fulfills the prophecy of the Lord Jesus: **“When He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth”** (John 16:13). I felt ever more certain that Almighty God is the



second coming of the Lord Jesus. After that, my sister sent me a book of God's words. I read God's word every day, and I found spiritual provision.

After that, I went to nearly every gathering I could. But gathering times often conflicted with the services I still attended at my church. I thought, "Should I leave my church?" But I had been an elder for 18 years. Each term was four years, and the end of my current term was still over a year away. What would my brothers and sisters think of me if I left the church in the middle of my term? Would they think I left so casually and had no loyalty to the Lord? But then I thought, the Lord had returned, so should I remain in religion? I knew very well that what the pastors said at the pulpit could no longer supply the believers. They discussed the Lord Jesus' signs and miracles over and over again, and they often talked about imitating the Lord, loving your neighbor as yourself, being patient, and so on. For decades, the pastors had been preaching these old, worn-out words and doctrines, and I too was unable to supply my brothers and sisters. I knew very well that the religious world had been desolate for some time. While considering this, I prayed to God, "God, I want to leave the church, but I still have concerns. I worry my brothers and sisters will gossip about me. God, what should I do? Please guide me." As I prayed, I thought of what the Bible says: **"The days come, ... I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of Jehovah"** (Amos 8:11). **"And also I have withheld the rain from you, when there were yet three months to the harvest: and I caused it to rain on one city, and caused it not to rain on another city: one piece was rained on, and the piece whereupon it rained not withered"** (Amos 4:7). I thought of Israel's seven years of famine, when there was no food, and Joseph's brothers all went to Egypt to ask him for food. Now the entire religious world was suffering from famine, and lacked the work of the Holy

Spirit. But in The Church of Almighty God I ate and drank God's current words, what I gained was real light, and the clear guidance of the Holy Spirit. If I didn't hurry to catch up, I would be eliminated by the work of the Holy Spirit. Now, I had found the church that had the work of the Holy Spirit, I had heard God's voice and welcomed the Lord, so I shouldn't remain in that desolate religion. After that, I didn't go to church if I hadn't been scheduled to work. But because I was an elder, I occasionally went there to worship.

One day, half a year later, I watched a stage play on the internet, A Wise Choice. The story deeply moved me. The protagonist, Li Mingzhi, was a town government official. After accepting the work of Almighty God in the last days, he understood some truth. He reflected on his years of service to the CCP and how he followed it in doing evil. He realized he was walking the road to ruin and saw clearly that only by following Christ and expending himself for God could he gain the truth and life. He prayed to God, saying he was determined to quit his job and devote himself to God. After his wife found out, she strongly opposed it, and then his family tried to force him to stop believing in God. He didn't compromise when besieged like this, he debated with them, and in the end, he resolutely quit his job and chose to follow God. Then I thought of myself. If I stayed in religion and didn't follow God wholeheartedly, I would never gain the truth, and I would be eliminated by God. Moreover, through gathering and fellowshiping on God's words during this time, I saw more and more clearly the fact of the religious world's resistance to God. I felt like God was guiding me and it was time for me to leave religion.

Almighty God's work of the last days spread to Taiwan several years ago. At the time, Almighty God's words were published in the newspapers, but Taiwan's religious circles jointly declared their boycott of Eastern

Lightning, a statement many pastors co-signed. These pastors knew long ago that the Lord returned, but they didn't seek or investigate, nor did they tell the others the news of the Lord's return. They even united to resist God and prevent the spread of God's kingdom gospel in Taiwan. This reminded me of the chief priests, scribes, and Pharisees two thousand years ago. They clearly saw that the words and work of the Lord Jesus had authority and power, but they didn't admit that the Lord Jesus is the Messiah because they worried that all the believers would follow Him, and they would lose their status and income. Therefore, they made up rumors to judge and condemn the Lord Jesus. The same is true in today's religious world. The pastors fear that if people all believe in Almighty God and don't go to church, no one will give offerings, and they won't get a salary, so to keep their status and income, they jointly condemned and resisted the work of Almighty God in the last days. This reminded me of what the Lord Jesus said when He cursed the Pharisees: **“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for you neither go in yourselves, neither suffer you them that are entering to go in. ... Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, you make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves”** (Matthew 23:13–15). These pastors of the religious world know clearly that the Lord has returned and expressed many truths, but they don't seek or investigate it, and they mislead and restrict others from exploring God's new work, and prevent believers from welcoming the Lord. These religious leaders are so hateful! They are not genuine followers of the Lord, they are modern-day Pharisees.

During a gathering, I read these words of Almighty God: **“There are those who read the Bible in grand churches and recite it all day long, yet not one among them understands the purpose of God's work. Not**

**one among them is able to know God; still less can any one among them accord with God's intentions. They are all worthless, vile people, each standing on high to lecture God. They willfully oppose God even as they carry His banner. Claiming faith in God, still they eat the flesh and drink the blood of man. All such people are devils that devour the soul of man, head demons that deliberately disturb those trying to step onto the right path, and stumbling blocks impeding those who seek God. They may appear of 'sound constitution,' but how are their followers to know that they are none other than antichrists who lead people to stand against God? How are their followers to know that they are living devils dedicated to the devouring of human souls?"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. All People Who Do Not Know God Are People Who Oppose God). As I pondered God's word, I realized that pastors in the religious world are paid from the offerings that brothers and sisters give to God, yet they stop people from turning to Him, and thereby ruin people's chance to welcome the Lord and enter the kingdom of heaven. Aren't they just devils that devour people's souls? I also thought about how churches had suspended all services due to the pandemic. During a meeting, the pastors discussed selling crops grown by the brothers and sisters outside our committee office as a way to help increase their income so they could continue to pay their tithes. I was very angry when I heard this, and I strongly objected. I said, "As pastors, you should care about people's lives. How can you only be concerned about money?" The general secretary said to me, "When the church suspends gatherings, the offerings from the brothers and sisters decrease, which significantly reduces church income." I saw that the pastors cared only about their salary and income, and not about watering the brothers and sisters and strengthening their faith. They were the hypocritical Pharisees the Lord Jesus spoke about. They coveted the

offerings given by brothers and sisters to God and didn't care about their lives. They also hindered people from welcoming the Lord, and tried to keep a firm grip on the believers. I saw the true face of the pastors more clearly. These religious pastors were nothing but antichrists who deny and resist God. After many years of belief in the Lord, I'd finally discerned them. I'd finally woken up. I thanked God for His mercy, and for giving me the chance to hear His voice and accept His work in the last days. Otherwise, I would have followed the pastors in doing evil and resisting God, and I would have lost my chance at salvation.

Later, I saw a video reading of Almighty God's word: **"As of now, do you truly understand what belief in religion and faith in God actually are? Is there a difference between belief in religion and faith in God? Where does the difference lie? Have you gotten to the bottom of these questions? What sort of person is the usual believer in religion? What is their focus? How should belief in religion be defined? Belief in religion is acknowledgment that there is a God, and believers in religion make certain changes to their behavior: They don't hit or swear at people, they don't do bad things that harm people, and they don't commit various crimes or break the law. On Sundays, they go to church. These are believers in religion. This means that behaving well and often attending assembly is proof that someone believes in religion. When someone believes in religion, they acknowledge that there is a God, and they think that to believe in God is to be a good person; as long as they do not sin or do bad things, they'll be able to go to heaven when they die and will have a good outcome. Their faith gives them sustenance on the spiritual level. As such, belief in religion can also be defined as follows: To believe in religion is to acknowledge, in one's heart, that there is a God; to believe that they will be able to go to**

heaven when they die; to have in their heart a spiritual pillar; to change a bit in behavior; and to be a good person. That's all there is to it. As for whether the God they believe in exists or not, whether He can express the truth, what He asks of them—they have no idea. They infer and imagine all of this based on the teachings of the Bible. This is belief in religion. Belief in religion is primarily the pursuit of behavioral changes and spiritual sustenance. But the path that such people walk—the path of pursuing blessings—has not changed. Their mistaken views, notions and imaginings about faith in God have not changed. The foundation of their existence, and the goals and direction that they pursue in their lives, are based on the ideas and opinions of traditional culture, and have not changed at all. Such is the state of everyone who believes in religion. So, what is faith in God? What is God's definition of faith in God? (Belief in the sovereignty of God.) It is belief in the existence of God and His sovereignty—that is what's most fundamental. To believe in God is to heed God's words, to exist, live, perform one's duty, and engage in all activities of normal humanity as God's words require. The implication is that to believe in God is to follow God, to do what God asks, to live as He asks; to believe in God is to follow the way of God. Are the goals and direction of the lives of people who believe in God not completely different from those of people who believe in religion? What does faith in God involve? It involves whether or not people are able to listen to God's words, accept the truth, cast off corrupt dispositions, drop everything to follow God, and be loyal in their duties. These things have a direct correlation with whether or not they can be saved. You now know the definition of faith in God; how, then, should faith in God be practiced? What does God require of believers in Him? (That they be honest people, and that they

pursue the truth, dispositional transformation, and knowledge of God.) **What requirements does God have for people's outward behavior?** (He requires that people be devout, not dissolute, and that they live out normal humanity.) **People should have the basic decorum of a saint and live out normal humanity. What, then, must one be possessed of to have normal humanity? This relates to many truths that one must practice as a believer. Only in possessing all these truth realities does one have normal humanity. Does someone believe in God if they don't practice the truth? What are the consequences of not practicing the truth? Just how should people believe in God in order to attain salvation, and submit to and worship God? All these things relate to practicing God's words and practicing many truths. So, one must believe in God according to God's words and His requirements, and they must practice according to His requirements; only this is true faith in God. This gets to the root of the matter. Practicing the truth, following the words of God, and living according to God's words: This is the right way of human life; faith in God relates to the path of human life. Faith in God relates to so many truths, and followers of God must understand these truths. How could they follow God if they did not understand and accept the truth? People who believe in religion do no more than acknowledge that there is a God and trust that there is a God—but they do not understand these truths, nor do they accept them, so people who believe in religion are not followers of God. To believe in religion, it is fine merely to behave well externally, to be restrained and regulations-abiding, and to have spiritual sustenance. If one behaves well and has a pillar and sustenance for their spirit, does their path in life change? (No.) Some people say that belief in religion and faith in God are the same thing. Do those people follow God, then?**

**Do they believe in God according to His requirements? Have they accepted the truth? If someone does none of these things, then they are not believers in God or followers of Him. The most obvious way that belief in religion manifests in someone is a lack of acceptance of God's present work and the truth He expresses. This is the trait that characterizes believers in religion; they are not followers of God at all"**

(The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. One Cannot Be Saved by Believing in Religion or Engaging in Religious Ceremony). God's words are so true! I thought of myself in religion, without the Holy Spirit's work, and without the watering and provision of God's current words. I could only abide by religious rules and rites, and outwardly do some good deeds. When I saw a brother or sister was negative, I'd support them and I'd often lay my hands on them and pray, and actively take part in the ministry, thinking that this was in line with God's intention. Only after reading God's words did I know that I was believing in religion, not believing in God. These were only outward good deeds, I wasn't practicing God's words and submitting to Him, and it wouldn't change my disposition. I thought that we could exchange hard work for a good destination and for our salvation, but this was just my own wishful thinking, and it was not in accordance with God's intention. I also remembered that I often used to tell my brothers and sisters to pursue and work hard for the Lord, that when we entered heaven, we would manage five or ten cities. Now, after reading God's word, I felt my preaching was absurd and unrealistic. None of us had experienced God's judgment in the last days, our corrupt dispositions had not been purified, and we weren't worthy of entering God's kingdom at all. The idea that when we entered heaven, we would manage five or ten cities was pure imagination. For believers in God, outwardly doing good deeds isn't enough. The key is to experience God's work and words, achieve a change in disposition, and



submit to and worship Him. This is in line with God's intention. I saw that I had been confused in my belief in the Lord, and this was not something God would praise. If I continued to believe in God and gather in religion, I would never gain the truth. But then I thought, I had my post as an elder, so I still had to go to church. If I left the church, I would surely be cast aside and despised, the others wouldn't respect me and think I wasn't loyal to the Lord. When I thought of this, I hesitated. I also thought about telling them I had welcomed the Lord and accepted Almighty God, but I knew the moment I said it, I would be persecuted and hindered by the pastors and the other co-workers. I fought back and forth with myself. I knew that sooner or later I would leave religion, but I didn't know how to give them my resignation. I often prayed and sought with God over this.

One day, I read another passage of Almighty God's words: **"God seeks those who long for Him to appear. He seeks those who are able to hear His words, those who have not forgotten His commission and offer up their hearts and bodies to Him. He seeks those who are as submissive as babes before Him and do not resist Him. If you devote yourself to God, unimpeded by any power or force, then God shall look upon you with favor and shall bestow His blessings upon you. If you are of high station, of honorable reputation, possessed of abundant knowledge, the owner of plentiful assets, and supported by many people, yet these things do not prevent you from coming before God to accept His calling and His commission and to do what God asks of you, then all that you do shall be the most meaningful cause on earth and the most just undertaking of mankind. If you reject the call of God for the sake of status and your own goals, all that you do shall be cursed and even despised by God"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Appendix 2: God Presides Over the Fate of All Mankind). From God's word, I understood that I'd

hesitated several times about leaving the church because I couldn't let go of my position as elder. Due to my status, my brothers and sisters looked up to me and respected me. They treated me differently, and they always thought of me when there was something that I could benefit from. I worried that I would lose all of this when I left the church. I craved status and coveted its benefits. This was not the proper path, and it displeased God. I knew clearly that I had to free myself from the shackles of status. If I didn't change things, I would walk the path of resisting God. This wasn't the result I wanted. I couldn't yearn for the high regard of my brothers and sisters anymore. It didn't matter whether others thought highly of me. What mattered was whether I could gain God's approval. I had to be loyal to God, not to status. Knowing this, my determination to leave the church grew stronger.

On Sunday, I went to church as usual, and after the service, I told everyone I was quitting my job as an elder. Everyone was surprised when they heard this, and they all tried to convince me to stay. After that, some pastors called me, saying that being an elder was a covenant with God that couldn't be broken. I thought, "The Lord has returned, expressed many truths, and done new work. Do I still need to keep this covenant and not welcome the Lord?" I remembered how the chief priests, scribes, and Pharisees served God in the temple all year round, but when the Lord Jesus came to work, they condemned and resisted the Lord, and nailed Him to the cross. Was this loyalty to God? They were not loyal to God at all. In fact they resisted Him. Today the Lord Jesus had returned, and had expressed new words. If I kept this so-called covenant and remained in the church, and didn't keep up with God's current words and work, then I wasn't loyal to God! I thought of how the Lord Jesus said: **"My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me"** (John 10:27). God's sheep should

listen to God's words and follow Him without any hesitation. So, no matter how the pastors tried to persuade me, I didn't waver. I am very grateful to God for leading me out of religion, letting me eat and drink His current words, and granting me the work of the Holy Spirit, which has allowed me to experience relief like I've never known before. With my elder status gone, I no longer spoke dry and empty words and doctrines from the pulpit. Instead, I focused on equipping myself with Almighty God's word, and every day felt very fulfilling and my heart was filled with joy.

Before long, word spread that I had left the church. Two months later, a sister posted a video from The Church of Almighty God in a religious group online, so the pastors had begun to lock down the church. They even released a message saying that because someone left the church, the church had to take precautions against Eastern Lightning. I was upset to hear this news, and sad for the pastors. I was more certain than ever that most pastors in the religious world don't like the truth. By nature, they're averse to and hate the truth. They think they know the Bible and God, but actually they are the blind leading the blind into the pit. There are still many of God's sheep wandering outside and not welcoming the Lord's return. I had to preach the gospel of kingdom to them, fulfill my responsibilities, and repay God's love, so I began to preach God's gospel of the last days. I've seen some people who truly believe in God returning to Him one after another, which makes me very happy and excited. I also feel that every day is full and meaningful. I thank God for leading me out of religion and letting me follow His footsteps. For this, I truly feel blessed.

## **10. You Must Become Honest to Be Saved**

By Ariella, France

In August 2021, I came to a church to water newcomers. After a while, I found that one of the newcomers had a rather arrogant disposition, often insisted on her own ideas, and couldn't work in harmony with her brothers and sisters. When others advised her of her problem, not only did she refuse to listen, she also argued over right and wrong, and judged them behind their backs and condemned them, causing them to feel constrained and disrupting the work of the church. In principle, she ought to be replaced. However, I was having some concerns, because I knew I should fellowship with her over this issue, but I had never been a leader or worker before, had never fellowshipped with anyone on this topic, and I didn't know how I should do so. But I also didn't want to ask the supervisor, afraid that when she knew I couldn't handle even this problem, she would think me incapable, and she would see right through me, and afterward would no longer value or cultivate me. I also thought about the fact that this newcomer was French, and that my spoken French was not very good. If I didn't express myself clearly, this could cause the newcomer to become negative and weak and withdraw from her faith, and this would be my fault. I thought this over and over, and passed the matter to the church leader Brother Claude to handle. I even found a noble-sounding justification, that this was training for Claude, letting him learn how to solve problems on his own. But later, because he didn't explain things clearly during his fellowship, the newcomer became negative and had misunderstandings, and she withdrew and stopped believing. Because of this, Claude became very despondent. He said he was too stupid to do fellowship. I knew this affair was my responsibility, but I failed to dissect my problems openly with him.

I calmly fellowshiped with him and went over his errors. Not only did I not reveal my true situation, I also let him mistakenly believe I was very good at solving problems.

A few days later at a gathering, in her fellowship our leader pointed out my situation. She said that a watering worker performed her duties without taking responsibility. When facing a problem she didn't solve it herself, but passed it on to a newcomer leader to do so, with the result that the problem was not properly resolved and a newcomer withdrew. When I heard the leader point out my problem so bluntly, I blushed to my roots, feeling I had lost so much face. Supervisors and watering workers from several churches were there. What would everyone think of me having heard that? They must surely think I was not to be trusted. After finishing her fellowship, she let everyone speak. I thought, "The leader spoke so directly here, and I was the one involved. If I don't fellowship now, won't that make it seem as if I don't have an attitude of accepting pruning? That would definitely give the leader a very bad impression." To restore my image, I fellowshiped first, and said with a slight whimper, "I feel great remorse that I let something like this happen. I see now that I am a very irresponsible person." After demonstrating self-knowledge I started to explain myself, saying, "Previously I had tried to learn about the newcomer's situation and fellowshiped with her on God's word, and made a lot of effort to help and support her. But because of the language barrier, when it came to dismissing her, I passed this to Claude to handle. I did not consider the consequences of this, which resulted in the newcomer withdrawing." After the talk, a sister sent me a message and without mincing her words said, "The tone of your speech was too meek, a little calculating. It sounded uncomfortable, just as if you were saying to people that you already knew you were wrong, and they shouldn't keep telling you

off.” When I read the message, my face burned bright red and I felt really ashamed. It was very embarrassing, like someone pulling back the curtain to expose a trick being played. Afterward, I always carried the sister’s words in my heart. I thought, she pointed out my problems uncompromisingly, and there must be God’s intention behind it. I should properly reflect and try to understand myself better. Whilst reflecting, I realized that whenever I was pruned, I always willingly admitted my problems and then expressed my real difficulties in a sad and aggrieved tone to win others’ sympathy and understanding, so that everyone would be lenient toward me and no longer hold me accountable. At the same time I also wanted others to feel that I could accept pruning, and have a good impression of me. Only then did I realize that my words had been full of trickery. Following that, I focused on the issue when eating and drinking the word of God.

One day, I remembered the dialogue between God and Satan in the Bible: “And Jehovah said to Satan, **From where come you?** Then Satan answered Jehovah, and said, From going to and fro in the earth, and from walking up and down in it” (Job 1:7). God has exposed and dissected the way in which Satan speaks: **“Satan’s words have a certain characteristic: What Satan says leaves you scratching your head, unable to perceive the source of its words. Sometimes Satan has motives and speaks deliberately, and sometimes governed by its nature, such words emerge spontaneously, and come straight out of Satan’s mouth. Satan does not spend a long time weighing such words; rather, they are expressed without thinking. When God asked where it came from, Satan answered with a few ambiguous words. You feel very puzzled, never knowing exactly where Satan is from. Are there any among you who speak like this? What kind of way is this to speak? (It is ambiguous and**

does not give a certain answer.) **What kind of words should we use to describe this way of speaking? It is diversionary and misleading. Suppose someone does not want to let others know what they did yesterday. You ask them: ‘I saw you yesterday. Where were you going?’ They do not tell you directly where they went. Rather, they say: ‘What a day it was yesterday. It was so tiring!’ Did they answer your question? They did, but they did not give the answer you wanted. This is the ‘genius’ within the artifice of man’s speech. You can never discover what they mean, nor perceive the source or intention of their words. You do not know what they are trying to avoid because in their heart they have their own story—this is insidious. Are there any among you who also often speak in this way? (Yes.) What then is your purpose? Is it sometimes to protect your own interests, sometimes to maintain your own pride, position, and image, to protect the secrets of your private life? Whatever the purpose, it is inseparable from your interests, linked to your interests. Is this not the nature of man? All who have such a nature are closely related to Satan, if not its family. We can put it like this, can we not? Generally speaking, this manifestation is detestable and abhorrent”** (The Word, Vol. 2. On Knowing God. God Himself, the Unique IV). In the past, when I read that God said Satan speaks in a diversionary and misleading manner, I always felt that people who could play these tricks were all scheming and shrewd. But when I read the word of God I discovered that I also revealed this kind of behavior. When the leader exposed me in front of my brothers and sisters, outwardly I accepted it and admitted that I had not acted responsibly. Actually, I didn’t really accept it, and felt a bit wronged. I felt I hadn’t been doing this duty for long, so these problems were excusable. Why did she expose me so directly in the gathering, without leaving me even a little face? After that,

everyone definitely thought I was not to be trusted and irresponsible. To restore my image, to let the brothers and sisters think I could accept pruning, I willingly admitted my mistake, and spoke in a meek tone with a deliberate whimper, as I wanted to tell people that I already knew I was wrong, that I was remorseful and very sorry, and that they shouldn't blame me anymore; that I was someone who could correct my mistakes and accept the truth. On the surface, I appeared to know myself, but I actually used this method to keep people's mouths quiet and stop them from continuing to talk about my problems or holding me accountable. This was my real intention. It was only when I reflected on this that I realized I was as treacherous and cunning as Satan. My words were filled with schemes to mislead and confuse people. The irresponsible way I did my duty caused problems and I was named by the leader. Not only did I not repent, but I pretended in front of the brothers and sisters to have self-knowledge, so that they would think I was someone who could accept the truth. I really was sly and deceitful! Speaking openly and knowing oneself should be manifestations of practicing the truth, but my frank confession contained tricks, it was self-justification to evade responsibility. I truly was too treacherous!

After that, I saw another passage of God's word that reveals people's evil disposition. God says: **"Deceitfulness can usually be seen on the outside: Someone beats around the bush or uses flowery language, and no one can read what they are thinking. That is deceitfulness. What is the primary characteristic of wickedness? It's that their words sound especially pleasing, and everything seems right on the surface. There doesn't appear to be any problem, and things look pretty good from every angle. When they do something, you don't see them using any particular means, and outwardly, there is no sign of weak points or**



flaws, yet they achieve their goal. They do things in an extremely secretive manner. This is how antichrists mislead people. People and matters like these are the most difficult to discern. Some people often say the right things, use good-sounding excuses, and employ certain doctrines, sayings, or actions that conform to human affection to pull the wool over people's eyes. They feign one thing while doing another in order to achieve their ulterior purpose. This is wickedness, but most people consider these behaviors to be deceitful. People have a relatively limited understanding and dissection of wickedness. Actually, wickedness is more difficult to discern than deceitfulness because it is more secretive, and its methods and actions are more sophisticated. If someone has a deceitful disposition within them, usually, others can detect their deceitfulness within two or three days of interacting with them, or they can perceive the revelation of their deceitful disposition in the person's actions and words. However, supposing that person is wicked: This isn't something that can be discerned within a few days, because without any significant events or special circumstances taking place in a short period of time, it isn't easy to discern anything from just listening to them talk. They always say and do the right things, and present one right doctrine after another. After a few days of interacting with them, you might think this person is pretty good, is able to forsake things and expend themselves, has spiritual understanding, has a God-loving heart, and has both conscience and reason in the way they act. But after they handle a few matters, you see that their speech and actions are mixed up with too many things, too many devilish intentions. You realize that this person isn't honest but deceitful—a wicked thing. They frequently use the right words and pleasing phrases that align with the truth and possess human affection to interact with

**people. In one respect, they establish themselves, and in another, they mislead others, achieving prestige and status among people. Such individuals are incredibly misleading, and once they attain power and status, they can mislead and harm many people. People with wicked dispositions are highly dangerous”** (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Five:

They Mislead, Draw In, Threaten, and Control People). God’s word reveals that the main characteristic of people with evil dispositions is that they are secretive in words and deeds. To hide their intentions from others, they always use the right words, and employ methods that are in accordance with human feelings and seem to be in line with the truth to achieve their ulterior motive. I thought about those things I had done; it was the same trick: I couldn’t handle the newcomer’s problems, so to hide my true stature from my supervisor, I passed the matter onto the newcomer leader. I even found a lofty-sounding excuse: This is training for Claude, to teach him how to solve problems on his own. In the end, he didn’t handle it well, and I fellowshipped with him and summed up his errors. I not only failed to reveal my real self, I also presented a good image in front of him to make him believe I was good at dealing with these issues. When I was exposed by my leader, to restore my image in everyone’s heart, I admitted my mistakes to stop other people talking, and even used a whimpering tone to win everyone’s sympathy and understanding and make them think I could accept the truth, knew myself, and had an attitude of repentance. That way, they wouldn’t hold me responsible anymore. Reflecting on my words and deeds in light of God’s words, I saw that I was really terrible. I used words that seemed to be in line with people’s sensibilities and with the truth to cover up my own despicable motives, and thereby mislead and confuse people. I was actually a sinister, deceitful and sly person. Previously, when I read God’s words revealing people’s evil disposition, I never applied them

to myself, thinking that I wasn't such a person. Having been exposed by the facts, and after further self-examination based on God's words, I finally had a little knowledge of my evil disposition.

On further reflection I realized that I had revealed my evil disposition in many areas. I remembered, not long before, the supervisor had asked me to hand over a job to Sister Marina and let her take over from me. When I heard this arrangement, I was disappointed. I had been responsible for this work on my own for over two years, and I thought that no one could replace me in this duty. I didn't think it would be given to someone else. I really wanted to ask the supervisor if I could continue to be in charge of this work, but I feared the supervisor would think I was too ambitious and unreasonable, so I didn't say anything. Outwardly, I obeyed, but when I handed over the work, I used the presence of the supervisor and Marina to deliberately mention some key details in this work. I wanted them to see that the experience I had accumulated and the principles I had learned in doing this duty couldn't be picked up in just a few days or weeks, so that the supervisor might let me continue performing this duty. Sure enough, after the handover, the supervisor asked me if I could mentor Marina a little longer. I was very happy to hear this. Although I wasn't able to continue being responsible for the work, what I said had served my own aim. Afterward, whatever problems and difficulties Marina encountered in her duty, she came to me to let me evaluate and judge things, and also asked me to review every task. In this way, I quietly took the power back into my own hands. Looking back in detail at my behavior at the time, I obviously didn't want someone else to take my place, but to keep the supervisor from thinking I was arrogant and unreasonable, I used the opportunity of handing over the job to show off my qualifications, and won the supervisor's approval. In this way, I successfully held onto this power, and "cleverly"

concealed my own intentions. The more I reflected on my behavior, the more afraid I felt. I really didn't dare believe I was this kind of person.

During a gathering, I read two passages of God's words revealing the evil dispositions of antichrists that gave me some further knowledge of myself. Almighty God says: **"The wickedness of antichrists has one obvious characteristic, and I will share with you the secret of discerning it: It is that in their speech and action alike, you cannot fathom their depths or see into their hearts. When they speak to you, their eyes always swivel around, and you cannot tell what sort of scheme they are hatching. Sometimes, they make you feel that they are loyal or quite sincere, but this is not the case—you can never see through them. You have a particular feeling in your heart, a sense that there is a deep subtlety to their thoughts, an unfathomable depth, that they are devious"** (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Seven: They Are Wicked, Insidious, and Deceitful (Part Two)). **"Here, 'devious' means insidious and cunning, and it refers to abnormal behavior. This abnormality refers to being deeply hidden and impenetrable to the average person, who can't see what such people are thinking or doing. In other words, the methods, motives, and starting points of this type of person's actions are particularly difficult to fathom, and sometimes their behavior is also sneaky and furtive. In short, there is a term that can describe the actual manifestation and state of a person's deviousness, which is 'a lack of transparency,' making them unfathomable and incomprehensible to others. The actions of antichrists have this nature—that is, when you realize and sense that their intentions for doing something are not straightforward, you find it quite terrifying, yet in the short term or for some reason, you still cannot see through their motives and intentions, and you just unconsciously feel that their actions are devious. Why do**

**they give you this kind of feeling? In one respect, it's because no one can get a feel for what they say or do. Another is that they often talk in a roundabout manner, misdirecting you, eventually making you unsure which of their statements are true and which are false, and what their words actually mean. When they lie, you think it's the truth; you don't know which statement is true or false, and you often feel that you've been fooled and tricked. Why does this feeling arise? It is because such people never act transparently; you cannot see clearly what they are doing or what they are busy with, inevitably making you suspicious of them. In the end, you see that their disposition is deceitful, insidious, and also wicked"** (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Six). God's words revealed the extremely evil dispositions of antichrists. There are always ulterior motives behind what they say and do, which makes them impossible to fathom. To achieve their own goals, antichrists often use illusions and sly methods to deceive and mislead people. They bamboozle others to the point that no one knows which of their words are true or false. My behavior was as sly as an antichrist's; everything I said and did always had personal motives. When I had a problem in doing my duty, I racked my brain to find ways to avoid it, and also to prevent my true stature from being exposed to my supervisor. When my leader exposed the problems in my duty, what I considered was how to make people feel that I was someone who accepted the truth, and how to shirk my responsibility. When I wanted to seize power and keep my position, I calculated how to not reveal my ambitions, and how to ensure the supervisor let me carry on being involved in the work and having the final say. I never thought there were such ulterior motives behind my words and deeds! To protect my reputation and position, all I thought about was how to conceal myself and deceive others. Especially in front of my leader and supervisor, I thought

carefully before every word I uttered, about which words would both achieve my purpose and effectively hide my real thinking. This was an antichrist disposition! As I reflected on this, I was a little afraid. God requires us to be honest people and say what we actually think, and be open about the corruption we reveal, what we don't understand and what we can't do. But what I thought about all the time was how to disguise myself, how to make people look up to me, and how to maintain my image. Everything I did was calculated, insidious and sly, and all I revealed was the deceitful and evil disposition of Satan. Once I realized this, scenes began flashing before my eyes. I recalled my childhood—my mother taught me “Fast horses don't need whips, loud drums don't need heavy drumsticks,” so I always strove to be a “fast horse” and “loud drum,” and an obedient well-behaved child. If I did something wrong, I admitted it right away without needing reminders. My parents hardly ever scolded or disciplined me when I was growing up, so I felt that being self-aware and admitting my mistakes could avoid a lot of suffering. For example, if I failed an exam, to keep my parents from blaming or scolding me, before they could speak I would start to cry, and put on a show of being miserable. My parents couldn't bear it when I cried. They feared I couldn't take any more pressure, so they no longer blamed me. Instead, they comforted me. So I escaped my parents' reproach, and my self-respect remained intact. After believing in God, I was still the same. When I failed to do my duty well and needed to take responsibility, I put on a show of being miserable and argued my case to cover up my careless and irresponsible behavior so that no one would prune me. Living by a satanic philosophy for worldly dealings had truly made me increasingly cunning and deceitful. I was really good at trimming my sails to the wind, using many insidious tricks, and had become the very image of Satan. The most terrifying thing was that tricks and cheating felt

almost normal to me. Were it not for my sister warning me and exposing me, I wouldn't have had the slightest awareness or felt any shame at all. I thought of God's word: **"God saves honest people, and those He wants for His kingdom are honest people. If you are capable of lies and trickery, you are a deceitful, crooked, and insidious person; you are not an honest person. If you are not an honest person, then there is no chance that God will save you, nor can you possibly be saved"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. The Most Fundamental Practice of Being an Honest Person). **"If your words are riddled with excuses and valueless justifications, then I say that you are someone who is loath to put the truth into practice. If you have many confidences that you are reluctant to share, if you are highly averse to laying bare your secrets—your difficulties—before others to seek the way of the light, then I say that you are someone who will not attain salvation easily, and who will not easily emerge from the darkness"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Three Admonitions). From God's word, we can see that God hates and despises deceitful people. Deceitful people have too many dark aspects in their hearts. Their words and actions always cheat and mislead people, and they never practice God's word. No matter how many years they believe in God, their corrupt dispositions do not change, and they can never achieve salvation. Recognizing this, I felt that I was in real danger. I prayed to God to say I wished to repent, and asked God to guide me and help me make a real change.

One day, I read in God's word: **"Be an honest person; pray to God to rid you of the deceit in your heart. Purify yourself through prayer at all times, be moved by the Spirit of God through prayer, and your disposition will gradually change"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Concerning the Practice of Prayer). **"You must seek the truth to resolve any**

problem that arises, no matter what it is, and by no means disguise yourself or put on a false face for others. Your shortcomings, your deficiencies, your faults, your corrupt dispositions—be completely open about them all, and fellowship about them all. Do not keep them inside. Learning how to open yourself up is the first step toward life entry, and it is the first hurdle, which is the most difficult to overcome. Once you have overcome it, entering the truth is easy. What does taking this step signify? It means that you are opening your heart and showing everything you have, good or bad, positive or negative; baring yourself for others and for God to see; hiding nothing from God, concealing nothing, disguising nothing, free of deceit and trickery, and being likewise open and honest with other people. In this way, you live in the light, and not only will God scrutinize you, but other people will also be able to see that you act with principle and a degree of transparency. You do not need to use any methods to protect your reputation, image, and status, nor do you need to cover up or disguise your mistakes. You do not need to engage in these useless efforts. If you can let these things go, you will be very relaxed, you will live without constraints or pain, and you will live entirely in the light. Learning how to be open when you fellowship is the first step to life entry. Next, you need to learn to dissect your thoughts and actions to see which are wrong and which God does not like, and you need to reverse them immediately and rectify them. What is the purpose of rectifying them? It is to accept and take on board the truth, while getting rid of the things within you that belong to Satan and replacing them with the truth. Before, you did everything according to your deceitful disposition which is lying and deceptive; you felt that you could get nothing done without lying. Now that you understand the truth, and loathe Satan's ways of doing things,



**you no longer act that way, you act with a mentality of honesty, purity, and submission. If you hold nothing back, if you do not put on a front, a pretense, or cover things up, if you lay yourself bare to the brothers and sisters, do not hide your innermost ideas and thoughts, but instead allow others to see your honest attitude, then the truth will gradually take root in you, it will blossom and bear fruit, it will yield results, little-by-little. If your heart is increasingly honest, and increasingly oriented toward God, and if you know to protect the interests of God's house when you perform your duty, and your conscience is troubled when you fail to protect these interests, then this is proof that the truth has had an effect in you, and has become your life"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Part Three). God's words touched my heart. God's requirements are actually very simple. They are that we speak and act purely and honestly, that in our hearts we have no deceit, and no pretense or deception, that we have an honest heart toward God, and that we are honest with others. If we have done something wrong or lied, we need to admit it and reflect on ourselves, and accept the truth with a sincere attitude. Only in this way can we gradually resolve our satanic dispositions. I thought about some brothers and sisters who were pruned. Although they felt ashamed at the time, they were able to accept and submit. Afterward, they could seek the truth, reflect on themselves, and find the cause of their failure. After some time they made more and more progress, became increasingly better in their duties, and they had God's guidance. As for me, to maintain my own image and position, I always took steps to shirk my responsibilities and to avoid pruning, and I thought to myself I was doing things the smart way. What did I get as a result? After years of believing in God, my life disposition hadn't changed. I was still so cunning, deceitful, and evil. I did my duty without grasping the principles, and when I encountered problems

I didn't know how to solve them. Only then did I realize that by using tricks time and time again to shirk responsibility and avoid pruning, I was actually rejecting God's salvation and ruining my chances to gain the truth. And every time I used tricks to shirk responsibility, I had to rack my brains to think of what to say and what excuse to use. I might get away with it once, but the next time a threat to my reputation and image came along, I had to think of another method to deceive people. Living in this deceitful and dishonest state every day was very tiring, God hates and detests it, and in the end, I would ruin my chances to gain the truth and be saved. How was this smart? I was ignorant and foolish. When I realized this, I eagerly wanted to resolve my deceitful and evil dispositions and become an honest person.

It occurred to me that Claude still didn't know my despicable motives for asking him to fellowship with the newcomer. If I didn't open up to him, not only would he have no discernment of me, he would still look up to me, and still be in a negative state and feel he couldn't do the work. So, I went to Claude, opened up to him about my motives for sending him to fellowship with the newcomer, and told him what I had learned from the matter. I also said I bore most of the blame for the newcomer's withdrawal and that I was selfish and despicable. Merely to protect my own face and interests, I had deceived him and made him take responsibility. Then he opened up to me about his self-reflection, knowledge, and what he had gained in this matter. After fellowshipping with him, I felt a great sense of release. I realized that only by practicing the truth and being an honest person can we feel peace of mind. After that, my supervisor organized a meeting to go over the shortcomings in our work. My effectiveness had greatly declined that month. I wanted to escape from this work meeting, but I knew clearly that God would be examining my every word and deed to

see how I behaved—to see if I would get up to my old tricks again to defend my image and position, and cover up my shortcomings and problems, or if I would face up to the problems in my duty, speak openly, and be an honest person. I told myself to practice the truth, even if it damaged my image. So, I opened up about how I muddled through and played tricks in my work during that period, and said I would sum up my problems and errors, correct my attitude toward my duty, and strive to be more effective. After this fellowship, I felt a great sense of release, and I had the will and motivation to perform my duty well. After I finished, my brothers and sisters didn't look down on me. Instead, they discussed with me some ways of practice for performing our duties. I benefited a great deal from their fellowship, and also learned more ways to change my errors. After that, when doing my duties I put these ways into practice, and I slowly became more effective in my work. I was very grateful to God.

Through this experience, I genuinely feel that no matter what mistakes we make or corruption we reveal in our duties, as long as we can face things calmly, open our hearts, and seek the truth, not only will no one look down on us, we can also reflect on ourselves and perform our duties better. I also felt that only those who practice the truth and are honest people have character and dignity, and only they truly feel at ease and free.

## 11. Should We Live by Traditional Virtues?

By Edwige, France

When I was in elementary school, there was a text that left a deep impression on me—the story of Kong Rong giving up pears. Kong Rong gave the biggest pears to his older and younger brothers, while he took the smallest, winning him the praise of his father. His story was recorded in the Three Character Classic. At that time, I really admired his moral conduct, and told myself to be a child like that as well. So, since childhood, if I had anything especially delicious or fun, although I really wanted it for myself, I would imitate Kong Rong and give it to my older and younger sisters, never fighting for it. My sisters liked me very much for this, and my elders praised me even more, telling other children to learn from me. This made me think that this was the kind of human quality that people should possess. After believing in God, this was also how I got along with my brothers and sisters. In both my duty and life, I never fought for things. In everything, I always put others first. Therefore, I was well-received among my brothers and sisters, and everyone said I was easy to get along with, not selfish, and considerate of others. I was very proud of myself for behaving this way, and I always thought my own humanity was good. Later, after being revealed by certain facts, I finally gained some understanding of my fallacious view.

In January 2022, due to the needs of gospel work, many new gospel and watering workers had to be found, so I was required to constantly seek watering staff suitable for cultivation. Sometimes, when I found brothers and sisters who were suitable for watering, the gospel staff had got to them one step ahead of me. This made me very unhappy, but I was too embarrassed to say it, because I thought everyone would think I was being selfish and competitive. So, I figured out a method. I deliberately sent a

message to the watering deacon, telling him that the people suitable for watering were being taken away by the gospel workers. This caused the watering deacon to be prejudiced against gospel workers and made harmonious cooperation between them impossible. When an upper-level leader learned about this, she pruned me severely and exposed me for saying things to sow discord and for disrupting church work. Being pruned made me sad, but I didn't reflect or know myself in any way.

Later, I heard that a sister named Lyse had good caliber and understanding, so was very suitable for watering work. I went to the church leader to ask for this sister to be transferred to water newcomers. But because people were urgently needed to preach the gospel, the church leader sent Lyse to perform that duty. When I heard the news, I felt very aggrieved, and wanted to speak to the church leader about it, but I thought, if I did this, my brothers and sisters would definitely think I was selfish and liked to fight for thing. I told myself, "No, I won't do it. That way, I'll look generous and good-natured." I therefore suppressed my resentment, saying hypocritically that I was happy for Lyse, and that both watering work and gospel work were the work of the church. Soon after, I heard the church leader say, "Brother Jerome has good caliber and a pure understanding." I wanted this brother to come water newcomers, but unexpectedly, the church leader said she had already sent him to be a gospel worker. I couldn't take it anymore. Last time, she had asked Lyse to preach the gospel. Why did she assign Jerome to gospel work too? We needed people to do watering work. So, I told the church leader about the situation. After listening to me, she said, "Since he is needed more to do watering work, I'll leave Jerome to you." But I realized that since the church leader had already sent him to do gospel work, if I insisted on taking him, the gospel workers might say I was selfish and that I was insisting on taking good people. So, I decided to let

him preach the gospel. This would show I had good humanity, that I wasn't selfish, and could consider others. In the group, I messaged that Jerome would be a good gospel worker and sent a series of happy and celebratory emojis. Actually, all of that was pretend. I was in a terrible mood, and full of complaints. How could the leader think only gospel work needed good personnel? She didn't see our actual difficulties. The more I thought, the more aggrieved I felt.

A few days later, something else happened—the leader asked us to report on recently cultivated personnel. I saw that the gospel workers were cultivating more people than we watering workers, and I couldn't bear it anymore. Dissatisfaction and grievance instantly filled my mind. I didn't expect that they were cultivating so many people. I had even let them have Lyse and Jerome. It was too unfair! Now, there were more gospel workers than watering workers. Thinking of the huge number of newcomers in the future, and how few watering staff we had, I felt a lot of pressure, as well as prejudice against my leader. It felt like she only thought about gospel work, and that there was no one thinking about watering work. The more I thought about it, the sadder I felt, and I couldn't help crying. Watching the gospel deacon and church leader enthusiastically speak about the newcomers in the group, I felt like an outsider. I was so frustrated that I even wanted to leave the group. At noon that day, I was so miserable that I couldn't eat. I lay in bed alone and sobbing; I felt that if I went on like this, I was bound to get sick. When a sister saw my state, she said I didn't speak directly and disguised myself so that others would think I was magnanimous and look up to me. After my sister's reminder, I finally started to reflect on myself. In God's word, I read these passages: **“Do you know what a Pharisee actually is? Are there any Pharisees around you? Why are these people called ‘Pharisees’? How are Pharisees described?”**

**They are people who are hypocritical, completely fake, and put on an act in everything they do. What act do they put on? They pretend to be good, kind, and positive. Is this what they are actually like? Absolutely not. Given that they are hypocrites, everything that is manifested and revealed in them is false; it is all pretense—it is not their true face. Where is their true face hidden? It is hidden deep within their hearts, never to be seen by others. Everything on the outside is an act, it is all fake, but they can only fool people; they cannot fool God. ... To others, such people seem very devout and humble, but it is actually fake; they seem tolerant, forbearing, and loving, but it is actually a pretense; they say they love God, but it is actually an act. Others think such people holy, but it is actually fake. Where can a person who is truly holy be found? Human holiness is all fake. It is all an act, a pretense. On the outside, they appear loyal to God, but they are actually just performing for others to see. When no one is looking, they are not the slightest bit loyal, and everything they do is perfunctory. Superficially, they expend themselves for God and have given up their families and careers. But what are they doing in secret? They are conducting their own enterprise and running their own operation in the church, profiting from the church and stealing offerings secretly under the guise of working for God.... These people are the modern hypocritical Pharisees” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Six Indicators of Life Growth). “If what you pursue is the truth, and what you practice is the truth, and the basis of your speech and actions is God’s words, the truth principles, and if others can profit and gain from you, would that not be of benefit to both of you? If living constrained by the thinking of traditional culture, you put on an act while others do the same, and you offer mannered niceties while they bow and scrape, each putting on an**

**act for the other, then neither of you is any good. You and they bow and scrape and engage in niceties all day long, without a word of truth, embodying in life only good behavior as promoted by traditional culture. Though such behavior is conventional as seen from the outside, it is all hypocrisy, behavior that tricks and misleads others, behavior that takes people in and tricks them, without a sincere word to be heard. If you make friends with such a person, you are bound to be taken in and tricked in the end. There is nothing that would edify you to be gained from their good behavior. All it has to teach you is falsehood and trickery: You trick them, they trick you. What you will feel, ultimately, is an extreme degradation of your integrity and dignity, which you will just have to endure. You will still have to present yourself with courtesy, in a well-educated and sensible way, without quibbling with others or demanding too much of them. You will still have to be patient and tolerant, affecting nonchalance and broad-minded magnanimity with a beaming smile. How many years of effort it must take to achieve such a condition! If you demand of yourself that you live like this before others, will your life not exhaust you? To pretend to have so much love, knowing full well that you do not—such hypocrisy is no easy thing! You would feel ever more strongly the exhaustion of comporting yourself in this way as a person; you would rather be born as a cow or horse, a pig or dog in your next life than as a human being. You would find them just too false and evil”** (The Word, Vol.

6. On the Pursuit of the Truth I. What It Means to Pursue the Truth (3)). God revealed that people live by hypocrisy based on traditional cultural ideas, which only brings pain, depression, and self-isolation. This was deeply stirring, because these ideas had harmed me deeply. Especially when I read: **“To pretend to have so much love, knowing full well that you do not—such hypocrisy**



**is no easy thing!”** I felt very ashamed—these words described me. Obviously, I wasn’t very generous, but I pretended to be generous, and I didn’t consider church work, yet still pretended to consider it. When Lyse and Jerome were asked to preach the gospel, I’d obviously been very reluctant, but I’d forced a smile, and even sent a message saying I was happy they were preaching the gospel. I’d been so false and disguised! God’s word reveals that the Pharisees were hypocrites who always disguised themselves. Outwardly, they had good humanity, and were tolerant and patient, humble, and pious. In actual fact, they used these methods to mislead and ensnare people, to protect their status and positions. Their essence was hating the truth and God, which is why the Lord Jesus condemned them as snakes and declared woe unto them. As I contemplated these things, I felt afraid. My false pretenses were exactly like those of the Pharisees. In several staff appointments, I had shown that I wouldn’t fight with others, and I wanted to trade on this for the good appraisal of others. I said that I should put the church’s interests first in all matters, but what I was actually considering was my own image. I worried the gospel workers would say I was selfish, had poor humanity, and didn’t consider church work, so I had to restrain myself. Although I outwardly seemed generous and magnanimous, I was in great pain and had a great deal of resentment, and I even held a prejudice against the church leader and gospel deacon. But I hid these thoughts away where they couldn’t see, so my brothers and sisters would think I had good humanity and could uphold church work. I reflected on my intentions and what I’d revealed, and felt disgusted with my behavior. I had misled and drawn people in with my outward good deeds and established my own image—all I’d said and done was disgusting and hateful to God.

Later, I listened several times to God's fellowship dissecting traditional culture and virtue, and started to reflect on myself and on the kind of traditional cultural ideas controlling me to live so hypocritically and so painfully. I read some of God's words: **"There is a story in traditional culture of Kong Rong giving up larger pears. What do you think: Is anyone who cannot be like Kong Rong not a good person? People used to think that whoever could be like Kong Rong was noble of character and firm of integrity, sacrificing their own interests for the sake of others—a good person. Is Kong Rong of this historic story a role model whom everyone has followed? Does the character have a certain place in people's hearts? (Yes.) It is not his name, but his thoughts and practices, his morality and behavior, that occupy a place in people's hearts. People esteem such practices and approve of them, and they inwardly admire Kong Rong's moral conduct"** (The Word, Vol. 6. On the Pursuit of the Truth I. What It Means to Pursue the Truth (10)). **"The influence of traditional culture on intellectuals is particularly profound. Not only do they accept traditional culture, but they also accept many ideas and views from traditional culture into their hearts and treat them as positive things, even to the point of regarding some well-known sayings as mottos, and in doing so they embark down the wrong path in life. Traditional culture is represented by Confucianist doctrine. Confucianist doctrine has a whole set of ideological theories, it mainly promotes traditional moral culture, and it was revered by the ruling classes of dynasties throughout history, who venerated Confucius and Mencius as saints. Confucianist doctrine advocates that a person should uphold the values of benevolence, righteousness, propriety, wisdom, and trustworthiness, learn to first be calm, collected and forbearing whenever things happen, keep cool and talk things out, not**

fight over or scramble for things, and learn to be politely accommodating, and earn respect from everyone—this is comporting oneself with decorum. These intellectuals place themselves in a higher position than the hoi polloi, and in their eyes, all people are objects of their forbearance and tolerance. The ‘effects’ of knowledge are pretty great! These people greatly resemble fake gentlemen, do they not? People who acquire too much knowledge become fake gentlemen. If this group of refined scholars is described in one phrase, it is refined scholarly elegance. ... They specialize in learning and imitating the refined elegance displayed by gentlemen. In what tone and way do they talk and discuss things together? Their facial expressions are especially gentle, and they speak politely and reservedly. They only express their own views and even if they know that others’ views are wrong, they don’t say anything. No one hurts anyone’s feelings, and their words are extremely soft, as if wrapped in cotton wool so they won’t hurt or irritate anyone, which makes one feel nauseous, anxious or angry just listening to them. The fact is that no one’s views are clear-cut, and no one gives in to anyone else. These kinds of people are so good at disguising. When encountering even the most trivial matter, they will disguise and enshroud themselves, and none of them will give a clear explanation. In front of ordinary people, what kind of posture do they want to adopt, and what kind of image do they want to put on? Namely, to let ordinary people see that they are modest gentlemen. Gentlemen are a cut above others and are objects of people’s veneration. People think that they have greater insights than average people, and that they have a better understanding of things compared with average people, so everyone consults them whenever they have an issue. This is exactly the outcome that these intellectuals want, they all hope to be venerated

**as saints”** (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Nine (Part One)). God’s word precisely described my problem. Why could I view these hypocritical good deeds as positive things to emulate? It was because I had been influenced by the traditional cultural idea of Kong Rong giving up bigger pears. I had lived by this idea since I was a child. To make people think I was a good child, I’d given a lot of my favorite toys and snacks to my sisters. When I grew up, I also showed generosity in all things. Although I did so reluctantly, I thought only such a person was possessing good humanity and understanding manners, and that this was the only way to gain the admiration and respect of others, so I reluctantly endured. After I believed in God, I still practiced this traditional notion as the truth. In the matter of these two staff appointments, I had simply forborne. There was clearly a shortage of watering staff, but I’d put on a mask of selflessness and allowed two people suitable for watering to preach the gospel instead. This had made me appear very noble and generous, but actually, I was so negative that I cried several times in secret because of the lack of staff. I had harbored prejudice against the church leader, and ultimately, the watering work had been delayed. What was the point of “giving” like that? For the sake of my good image, I’d adopted a noble posture like Kong Rong, and I hadn’t cared if it delayed church work. I was an authentic hypocrite. If I’d really been concerned with church work, I would have evaluated our need for staff by the actual demands of watering work, but to protect my image, I hadn’t followed principles at all. Even when watering work had been affected by the lack of staff, I had still insisted on “generously” letting people go. I had earned the praise of others at the cost of delaying watering work. No wonder God says such people are hypocrites. I realized my behavior had been really false.

Later, I read some of God's words that stirred me. Almighty God says: **"You must know clearly that any sort of saying about moral conduct is not the truth, much less can it stand in for the truth. They are not even positive things. So what exactly are they? It may be said with certainty that these sayings on moral conduct are heretical fallacies with which Satan misleads people. They are not in themselves the truth reality that people should possess, nor are they positive things that normal humanity ought to live out. These sayings on moral conduct constitute counterfeits, pretenses, falsifications, and tricks—they are factitious behaviors, and do not at all originate in man's conscience and reason or in their normal thinking. Therefore, all of traditional culture's sayings regarding moral conduct are preposterous, absurd heresies and fallacies. With these few fellowships, the sayings Satan puts forth about moral conduct have on this day been condemned, in their entirety, to death. If they are not even positive things, how is it that people can accept them? How can people live by these ideas and views? The reason is that these sayings on moral conduct align so well with people's notions and imaginings. They evoke admiration and approval, so people accept these sayings on moral conduct into their hearts, and though they cannot put them into practice, inwardly, they embrace and worship them with gusto. And thus, Satan uses various sayings on moral conduct to mislead people, to control their hearts and their behavior, for in their hearts, people worship and have a blind belief in all sorts of sayings on moral conduct, and they would all like to use these claims to affect greater dignity, nobility, and kindness, thereby achieving their goal of being highly regarded and praised. All the various sayings on moral conduct, in brief, ask that when people do a certain kind of thing, they should demonstrate some sort of behavior or**

human quality in the realm of moral conduct. These behaviors and human qualities seem quite noble, and they are revered, so all people, in their hearts, very much aspire toward them. But what they have not considered is that these sayings about moral conduct are not at all the principles of comportment that a normal person should follow; instead, they are a variety of hypocritical behaviors that one may affect. They are deviations from the standards of conscience and reason, departures from the will of normal humanity. Satan uses false and pretended sayings on moral conduct to mislead people, to make them worship it and those hypocritical so-called sages, thereby causing people to see normal humanity and the criteria for human comportment as ordinary, simple, and even lowly things. People despise those things and think them beneath contempt. This is because the sayings on moral conduct espoused by Satan are so pleasing to the eye and so aligned with man's notions and imaginings. The fact is, though, that no saying on moral conduct, whatever it may be, is a principle that people should follow in their comportment or their dealings in the world. Mull it over—is this not so? In essence, sayings on moral conduct are just demands that people superficially live more dignified, noble lives, enabling them to have others worship or praise them, rather than look down on them. The essence of these sayings shows that they are just demands that people demonstrate good moral conduct through good behavior, thus covering and restraining the ambitions and extravagant desires of corrupt humanity, covering up man's evil and hideous nature essence, as well as the manifestations of various corrupt dispositions. They are meant to enhance a person's personality through superficially good behavior and practices, to enhance the image others have of them and the wider world's estimation of them. These points show that sayings

**on moral conduct are about covering up man's inner thoughts, views, aims and intentions, their hideous countenance, and their nature essence with superficial behavior and practices. Can these things be covered up successfully? Does trying to cover them up not make them all the more apparent? But Satan does not care about that. Its purpose is to cover up the hideous countenance of corrupt humanity, to cover up the truth of man's corruption. So, Satan has people adopt the behavioral manifestations of moral conduct to disguise themselves, which means that it uses the rules and behaviors of moral conduct to make a neat package of man's appearance, enhancing a person's human qualities and personality so that they can have others esteem and praise them. Basically, these sayings on moral conduct determine whether a person is noble or lowly on the basis of their behavioral manifestations and moral standards"** (The Word, Vol. 6. On the Pursuit of the Truth

I. What It Means to Pursue the Truth (10)). Only after reading God's words did I understand I had always held a fallacious view, which was that I treated the virtues of traditional culture as a standard to measure whether a person's humanity was good or bad. I mistakenly viewed virtue as truth, thinking people with virtue had good humanity. Actually, virtue is not the life principle people should follow. It is an act of hypocrisy, and in essence it is a tactic and method that Satan uses to mislead and corrupt people. Satan uses traditional culture to instill moral standards for people to live by. They can thereby use outward good deeds to disguise themselves and hide their inner corruption and ugliness as a means to win others' high regard—as a result, people become ever more hypocritical and deceitful. I saw that I was also this way. I considered the virtues of traditional culture as the criterion for my actions. Although it looked like I didn't vie with others, and could get along with them, actually, I was forcing myself to do good deeds to

make people say I was good, and to maintain my image in their hearts. But I said I was considering the work of the church. I was so deceitful!

Later, I read in God's word: **"A person who understands the truth should dissect the various claims and demands of traditional culture regarding moral conduct. You should dissect which of them you cherish the most, and always cling to, that always serves as the basis and criterion for how you view people and things, and how you comport yourself and act. Then, you should hold the things that you cling to against God's words and requirements for comparison, and look at whether these aspects of traditional culture oppose or conflict with the truths that God expresses. If you truly do find a problem, you must dissect at once where it is, exactly, that these aspects of traditional culture are wrong and absurd. When you are clear on these issues, you will know what is the truth and what is fallacy; you will have a path of practice, and you will be able to choose the path you should walk. Seek the truth in this way, and you will be able to mend your ways"** (The Word, Vol. 6. On the Pursuit of the Truth I. What It Means to Pursue the Truth (5)). From God's word I understood that if you don't want to live by these traditional ideas, you first need to discern and dissect these things, uncover their errors and absurdities, where they violate the truth, and what consequences living by them brings about. Only when you see these things clearly can you give them up and accept the truth. I started to wonder: Does the "giving" in Kong Rong giving up bigger pears conform to the truth principles? Is this "giving" one of God's requirements for normal humanity? Are those who forbear in everything really good people? My own blind forbearance had caused a serious staff shortage in watering work. To show generosity and forbear in all things, I had told many hypocritical lies. Being educated with these traditional ideas, instead of making me a good person, had made me



hypocritical and deceitful. When I gained the high regard of others, I hadn't been happy—instead I'd become more and more depressed and miserable. These were the consequences of worshiping traditional culture. Without God to reveal the essence of traditional culture, I would have been blinded all my life. I couldn't stop thanking God for expressing the truth and dissecting these traditional ideas, enabling me to awaken.

After that, I thought, “Since Kong Rong's virtue of giving up bigger pears was only outward good behavior, and didn't mean he had good humanity, what is genuinely good humanity?” In God's word, I read: **“There must be a standard for having good humanity. It does not involve taking the path of moderation, not sticking to principles, endeavoring not to offend anyone, currying favor everywhere you go, being smooth and slick with everyone you meet, and making everyone speak well of you. This is not the standard. So, what is the standard? It is being able to submit to God and the truth. It is approaching one's duty and all manner of people, events, and things with principles and a sense of responsibility. This is plain for all to see; everyone is clear about this in their heart. Moreover, God scrutinizes people's hearts and knows their situation, each and every one; no matter who they are, no one can fool God. Some people always boast that they possess good humanity, that they never speak ill of others, never harm anyone else's interests, and they claim never to have coveted other people's property. When there is a dispute over interests, they even prefer to suffer loss than take advantage of others, and everyone else thinks they are good people. However, when performing their duties in God's house, they are wily and slippery, always scheming for themselves. Never do they think of the interests of God's house, never do they treat as urgent the things God treats as urgent or think as God thinks, and never can they**

**set aside their own interests so as to perform their duties. They never forsake their own interests. Even when they see evil people committing evil, they do not expose them; they have no principles whatsoever. What kind of humanity is this? It is not good humanity. Pay no attention to what such people say; you must see what they live out, what they reveal, and what their attitude is when they perform their duties, as well as what their internal state is and what they love. If their love of their own fame and gain exceeds their loyalty to God, if their love of their own fame and gain exceeds the interests of God's house, or if their love of their own fame and gain exceeds the consideration they show for God, then are such people possessed of humanity? They are not people with humanity. Their behavior can be seen by others and by God. It is very difficult for such people to gain the truth"** (The Word, Vol. 3.

The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. In Giving One's Heart to God, One Can Obtain the Truth). From God's word, I understood a person with truly good humanity loves the truth and positive things, is responsible in their duties, sticks to the truth principles, and upholds the work of the church. Those who outwardly offend no one, forbear blindly and without principle, and who would rather suffer loss themselves than take advantage of others, although they outwardly have good character, in their duties, they always seek to protect their own interests, never practice the truth, and never consider the work of the church. Such people do not have good humanity whatsoever. I didn't want to live by traditional culture and be a superficially good person anymore. I wanted to live out a human likeness according to God's requirements.

As I read God's word, I found a path of practice. God says: **"You must seek the truth to resolve any problem that arises, no matter what it is, and by no means disguise yourself or put on a false face for others.**

**Your shortcomings, your deficiencies, your faults, your corrupt dispositions—be completely open about them all, and fellowship about them all. Do not keep them inside. Learning how to open yourself up is the first step toward life entry, and it is the first hurdle, which is the most difficult to overcome. Once you have overcome it, entering the truth is easy. What does taking this step signify? It means that you are opening your heart and showing everything you have, good or bad, positive or negative; baring yourself for others and for God to see; hiding nothing from God, concealing nothing, disguising nothing, free of deceit and trickery, and being likewise open and honest with other people. In this way, you live in the light, and not only will God scrutinize you, but other people will also be able to see that you act with principle and a degree of transparency. You do not need to use any methods to protect your reputation, image, and status, nor do you need to cover up or disguise your mistakes. You do not need to engage in these useless efforts. If you can let these things go, you will be very relaxed, you will live without constraints or pain, and you will live entirely in the light”** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Part Three). From God’s word, I understood I shouldn’t disguise myself to give others a false image. Instead, I should be an honest, simple, and open person, and I should open up and communicate about any problems or difficulties I had, so that my brothers and sisters can better help me. When I didn’t speak up, when I just blindly bore things and disguised myself, everyone believed there was no shortage of watering staff and thought the work was going well. Actually, however, I was suffering, and church work was being harmed. So, I consciously practiced according to God’s word and communicated difficulties clearly with my brothers and sisters. After that, they all provided some personnel capable of doing the watering work. This

made me see how easy and enjoyable it is to practice according to God's word. Living by traditional culture, we only become more and more corrupted, more and more false and deceitful, and more and more miserable. Only practicing the truth lets us live out a human likeness, become genuinely good people, and experience real peace and joy. Thank God!

## 12. Two Decades of Hardship

By Wang Qiang, China

I became a Christian in 1991, then a few years later I became a church preacher. In 1995, police in the Political Security Section of the county Public Security Bureau took me in, demanding to know where I was preaching and who my leader was. When I wouldn't answer, they punched and kicked me, and tortured me for four or five hours, leaving me black and blue. Then they locked me up in the county detention house. The police and the other prisoners tortured me for 42 days, leaving me on the brink of death. Later my wife used some connections and paid a fine of nearly 10,000 yuan to get me released. I didn't understand. As believers sharing the gospel, we guided others to follow the Lord's teachings, be good people, be tolerant, and love others as ourselves. Why would the Communist Party persecute us so brutally? Then after gaining faith in Almighty God, through the revelations in God's words and personal experience, I gained discernment over the CCP's demonic essence of hating the truth and opposing God.

One day in December 1999 while my wife and I were having breakfast, three officers burst in. One of them was an officer who had arrested me for my faith in the Lord before. He looked me up and down a few times and said sternly, "You've been reported for believing in Almighty God and preaching the gospel. You really didn't learn your lesson!" After that, they searched the whole place inside and out, leaving no stone unturned. This went on for about an hour, and they left my house in utter chaos, but didn't find any books or materials about faith. Then they put me in a car to take me to the police station. On the way, scene after scene from the first time I was arrested and tortured flashed through my mind. I was

pretty scared, thinking, “Those demons particularly hate believers, so how will they torture me?” I silently prayed to God and remembered something He said: **“Whomsoever I bestow My glory unto shall bear Me witness and give their life for Me. This has long been predestined by Me”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. What Do You Know of Faith?). True—my arrest that day had God’s permission, and how much I suffered, whether I lived or died, was all in God’s hands. I had to bear witness. God’s words gave me faith and strength, and I felt calmer.

They first took me to the police station to search me and question me, but seeing that I wouldn’t talk, they took me to the county Public Security Bureau. There, several officers surrounded me, punching and kicking me, and some used police batons on me. I fell to the ground from their beating. I was bleeding from the nose and mouth, my clothing was torn, and my head was spinning. I didn’t even have the strength to stand up. Then, the head officer grabbed me by the neck and said, “If I don’t show you what’s what, you won’t know who you’re messing with! Talk! Who’s your leader? Who have you preached to?” I was feeling pretty nervous. If I didn’t talk, they’d definitely keep beating me, and if that went on, I thought I could end up disabled or dead. I prayed to God in my heart, asking for His protection and guidance. Then I thought of these words from God: **“If man harbors timid and fearful thoughts, it is because Satan has fooled them, afraid that we will cross the bridge of faith to enter into God”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Utterances of Christ in the Beginning, Chapter 6). I realized my timidity and fear were coming from Satan, and however fierce the police were, they could just ravage and torture my flesh, but they couldn’t touch my soul. Even if they beat me to death that day, my soul would be in God’s hands. This thought gave me faith and strength, and I wouldn’t betray God or sell out my brothers and sisters, even if it meant death. I clenched my

teeth and didn't say a word. I wouldn't respond after they asked me several times, so they kicked me to the ground, then got a police baton, put it on the concrete floor, and got two people to pull on me and force me to kneel on it. The pressure on my shin bones caused piercing pain and tears were falling from my eyes. An officer brutally stomped on my calves several times, which hurt so much I cried out and fell on the floor, curled up in a ball. The officer shouted, "Stand up!" But I couldn't get my legs to move—I didn't have the strength to stand up. Feeling incredibly miserable, I said a prayer to God, "Oh God, I almost can't take it anymore and I don't know how else they're going to torture me. God, I don't want to betray You—please give me faith and strength." Just then I thought of some of God's words: **"Have you ever accepted the blessings that you were given? Have you ever sought the promises that were made for you? You will surely, under the guidance of My light, break through the stranglehold of the forces of darkness. You will surely not, in the midst of darkness, lose the guidance of My light. You will surely be the masters of all creation. You will surely be overcomers before Satan. You will surely, at the downfall of the kingdom of the great red dragon, stand up amid the myriad throngs as proof of My victory. You will surely stand firm and unwavering in the land of Sinim. Through the sufferings you endure, you will inherit My blessings, and will surely radiate My glory throughout the entire universe"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. God's Words to the Entire Universe, Chapter 19). God's words bolstered my faith and strength. I had to truly lean on God, and with the guidance of His words, I could surely triumph over Satan and stand firm in my testimony. After six or seven hours of awful torture, I was beaten to a pulp and my left calf was mangled. Since I still wouldn't talk, the police took me to a detention house. The staff there saw how badly I was injured and didn't want to take me, and

it wasn't until the police negotiated with them for a while that they finally agreed to accept me.

They took me to a cell where I smelled something foul. It was a tiny space of about 10 square meters with some filthy, smelly blankets in it along with a toilet. Fifteen or sixteen people all ate, drank, slept and relieved themselves in there—it was damp and messy. The other prisoners eyed me fiercely. I felt really nervous and was praying to God nonstop. I remembered something He said: **“Have no fear, as My hands support you, and I will keep you away from all evil ones”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Utterances of Christ in the Beginning, Chapter 28). God's words comforted me and gave me faith, and I didn't feel as nervous anymore. The next day, the head prisoner intentionally picked a fight and got the others to beat me up, leaving me rolling around on the ground. I ended up curled up in a ball from the pain, unable to move. After that, the police would interrogate me from time to time, demanding that I sell out the church, then switched to less direct tactics when they couldn't get anything out of me. Once, my wife's uncle Li came to question me. He managed materials at the Political Security Section of the Public Security Bureau. He asked me, feigning concern, “Are there any prisoners beating you? Are you getting enough to eat?” Then he had another officer go buy me some steamed buns and a few packs of cigarettes. He heaved a sigh and said with a look of concern, “If you don't confess you'll probably get prison time, and I won't be able to help you. If you do, you might be able to go home in time for the New Year. Give it some thought!” When he said that, I was thinking that my parents were in their 70s and my wife was taking care of three little kids on her own. How would they get by if I really did go to prison for three to five years? The Communist Party prisons are like hell and you can be tortured to death at any time. What would they do if I died? I felt more



dismal the more I thought about it, so I prayed, asking God to watch over me. I thought of this quote from God's words: **"At all times, My people should be on guard against the cunning schemes of Satan, guarding the gate of My house for Me; they should be able to support each other and provide for each other, so as to avoid falling into Satan's trap, at which time it would be too late for regrets"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. God's Words to the Entire Universe, Chapter 3). God's words woke me up. The police wanted to use my affections for my family and fleshly weaknesses to get me to betray God. It was so insidious! I'd nearly fallen for it. My life was given by God, and whether I lived or died was up to Him. The fate of my parents and my wife was also in God's hands—He had the final say. If I did get a prison sentence, it would be with God's permission. I had to stand firm even if it took my life! So I told him, "I've said everything I have to say, and I don't know anything else." When his little trick didn't work, he glared at me for a bit, then left in a huff.

The prison guards were always telling the other prisoners to torment me in lots of ways, like "eating dumplings," "looking in the mirror," "eating the elbow," and reciting prison rules. "Eating dumplings" was wrapping me up in bedding, then having the others punch and kick me, leaving me dizzy and disoriented. "Looking in the mirror" was putting my head into the toilet where there was urine and feces, and I'd choke on it if I wasn't careful. "Eating the elbow" was jabbing an elbow into my back. Also, they made me recite prison rules, and if I messed up a word they'd take off my pants and use a shoe with a plastic sole to beat me until I got bloody blisters on my behind. On top of that, the prison guards often had me working day and night. I had injuries so I worked slowly, and the other prisoners kept giving me more tasks. I'd be beaten if I didn't finish them. Facing this kind of torture was really painful and depressing for me. Sometimes I'd get so weak

that I wanted to die, to put an end to that suffering. I was always praying to God, asking Him to watch over my heart. One day, the Lord Jesus' crucifixion suddenly came to mind. God is supreme, holy and without sin, and He personally became incarnate and came to work to save humanity, but He was nailed to the cross. Now God has become flesh once again, coming to work in China, and just the same, He suffers mankind's rejection, slander, condemnation, and blasphemy. He's also pursued by the Communist Party. But still, He keeps expressing truths to save mankind. God's love for man is so great! I'm a believer pursuing salvation—what does this small amount of suffering count for? Besides, to suffer is to have a share in Christ's kingdom, and in His hardship. It is a thing of glory. There is value and meaning in it. Realizing this renewed my faith and strength, and I wasn't as miserable anymore, no matter how the prisoners tortured me.

After breakfast one day, a few police officers drove me to a market about 5.5 miles from my house, then put me and a dozen or so other prisoners onto a platform. I realized they were carrying out a denunciation rally. A row of county Public Security Bureau cadres were seated on stage, with a dense crowd of people below. Lots of them were whispering to each other and pointing at me. My face grew hot, my heart beat faster, and I didn't dare lift my head. I was thinking that quite a few of my relatives, friends, and acquaintances were in that area, as well as co-workers in my previous denomination. What would they think, seeing me standing trial with a sign around my neck with the other prisoners? How could I show my face after that? The more I thought about it the worse I felt, so I prayed and asked God for strength. I thought of some words from God: **“I hope that all people can bear strong, resounding testimony to Me before the great red dragon, that they can offer themselves up for Me a final time, and**

**fulfill My requirements one last instance. Can you truly do this?"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. God's Words to the Entire Universe, Chapter 34). God's words gave me faith and strength. As believers, we're on the right path. We don't break laws or do bad things, so there's nothing to be ashamed of. The humiliation I faced was suffering persecution for righteousness. I should feel proud. This thought calmed me down. They ended up slapping me with the charges of "unlawful faith" and "disturbing social order," and gave me three years of reeducation through labor. Seeing all those sanctimonious, self-satisfied faces on stage, I hated those demons with every fiber of my being, and I swore that even if they sentenced me to 30 years, not just three, I'd never betray God, never bow to Satan!

I was sent to a labor camp two days after the denunciation rally. There, I was assigned to a construction site to dig trenches and I had to move cement and sand in a wheelbarrow. I had to do a dozen or more hours of that kind of heavy labor every day. Sometimes I worked slowly because my calf was injured, and the correctional officer beat me when he noticed. I felt some weakness at the thought that I'd have to stay there for three years. I didn't know how to get through that or if I'd make it out alive. During that time I prayed to God a lot and thought about His love. Thinking of the pain and humiliation He'd suffered to save us—a corrupted mankind—was really moving for me. It made me ready to submit, and I wanted to follow God until the end, no matter how much I suffered.

After a while I found out there was a prisoner named Shang Jin who was a believer in the Lord, and since we were both Christians, we'd talk about our faith when we had the chance. I saw Brother Shang Jin had good humanity and was longing for the Lord's return, so I wanted to share God's work in the last days with him. But his sentence was up and he was released before I had the chance. I felt this was such a shame and I said a prayer to

God, asking Him to open up a path so I'd have a chance to share the gospel with Shang Jin. Not long after his release, I was doing labor at the worksite like I always did. One day, I had a pain in my belly and had to use the bathroom more than usual. I noticed the bathroom wall wasn't very high and there was a big factory on the other side of it. When I was in the bathroom, a guard was outside reading a newspaper. I wasn't sure if that was God opening a path for me, so I said a prayer. After praying, I felt sure in my heart that this was God giving me a way out, so I jumped over the wall and went into the factory when the guard was distracted. I quickly took off the prison uniform, slung it over my shoulder, and walked out the main entrance. I never would have dreamed that I could escape with such tight security. I was so grateful to God.

But before long, I heard sirens behind me. I rushed to hide in a grove of trees and was praying nonstop. I waited until it got dark, then very carefully came out of the grove. I followed a small rural road, asking the way, heading toward Shang Jin's house. Late at night, soon after I'd gotten onto the highway that went to his house, I saw there were some police officers ahead manning a checkpoint and I got pretty scared. What if they found me out? They wouldn't let me go if they got their hands on me. I prayed to God in my heart. I saw a haystack and rushed to hide in it, staying there for over an hour. I very carefully climbed out only after I saw the police car leave, then kept heading toward Shang Jin's house, with difficulty. I hadn't gone far before my calf hurt so much I couldn't walk anymore, so I sat down and rested, then started walking again. As I walked, I hummed the hymn **"I Wish to See the Day of God's Glory"**:

**1 Today I accept God's judgment, and tomorrow I will receive His blessings. I'm willing to give my youth and offer up my life to see the day of God's glory. God's words and God's love have enchanted my**

**heart. He works and expresses the truth, bestowing upon man the way of life. I'm willing to drain the bitter cup and suffer to gain the truth. I will endure humiliation without complaint. I wish to spend my life repaying God's grace.**

**2 With God's exhortations in my heart, I will never bend the knee to Satan. Though our heads may roll and our blood may spill, the backbones of God's people cannot be bent. I will bear resounding testimony for God, and humiliate devils and Satan. Pain and hardships are predestined by God, and I will be loyal and submit to Him unto death. Never again will I cause God to weep or worry. I will offer up my love and loyalty to God and complete my mission to glorify Him.**

.....

—Follow the Lamb and Sing New Songs

I felt my faith grew as I hummed it. I finally got to Shang Jin's house around noon the next day. We cried tears of joy as soon as we saw each other. Considering the police would be coming, he arranged for someone else to host me. As expected, around noon on the third day the police drove to Shang Jin's house. Not finding me, they left in exasperation. I shared God's gospel of the last days with Shang Jin after that. With God's guidance, over a hundred brothers and sisters from his denomination came before Almighty God.

I became a wanted criminal after escaping from the labor camp. I traveled around sharing the gospel, not daring to return home. Ten years went by in a flash, then in September 2010 I snuck back to my hometown and went to my sister's place. I saw my wife there, and she told me that after I escaped from the labor camp, the police went to our house and searched our home and our relatives' homes, too. They even tried coaxing

my wife, parents, and other relatives in a threatening way so they'd reveal my whereabouts. The police also secretly surveilled the area around my house for a few days. All those years, the police hadn't given up on chasing me. For the New Year and my parents' birthdays, they always asked about me and saw if I'd gone back home. In 2002, my wife was arrested because of her faith, and our family had to spend over 2,000 yuan and use connections to get her out. Things got difficult for our family because both me and my wife had been arrested and fined. Our kids were forced to drop out of school before finishing elementary and middle school, and had to leave the area to work for a living. I was so upset to hear that. My parents came to my sister's house to see me when they heard I'd come back. They started crying the moment they saw me without saying a word, but they didn't dare cry too loudly, afraid someone else would hear them. They said they dreamt of me all the time, and they'd cry themselves blind. I couldn't hold my tears back when I saw how feeble my parents looked. A few days later, riding his bike back out to my sister's house to see me, my dad accidentally fell and broke his thighbone. I was really worried for him when I heard about it, and I took the risk of going to see him at home, at midnight. My dad started crying when he saw me, and said, "The doctor said he couldn't set my thighbone. I just have to wait to die. This is probably the last time we're going to see each other." I comforted him, forcing back my tears. I didn't dare stay long, afraid of being arrested, so I left after an hour or so. Because of the Communist Party's arrest, for over a decade I'd been on the run, I couldn't go back home, I couldn't see my family, be filial to my parents, or fulfill my responsibilities as a husband and father to my wife and three kids, and now my father was ill and I couldn't take care of him for a single day. I felt I'd really let my parents down and I was overcome with heartache. I quickly came before God in

prayer, asking Him to guide me, to give me faith and strength. After praying I read God's words that say: **"The path God guides us along does not go straight up, but is a winding road full of potholes; God says, furthermore, that the rockier the path is, the more it can reveal our loving hearts. Yet none of us can open up such a path. In My experience, I have walked many rocky, treacherous paths and I have endured great suffering; at times I have even been so utterly grief-stricken that I wanted to cry out, but I have walked this path to this day. I believe that this is the path led by God, so I endure the torment of all the suffering and continue onward. For this is what God has ordained, so who can escape it? I do not ask to receive any blessings; all I ask is that I am able to walk the path I ought to walk according to God's intentions. I do not seek to imitate others, walking the path that they walk; all I seek is that I may fulfill My devotion to walk My designated path until the end. ... This is because I have always believed that the amount an individual must suffer and the distance they must walk on their path is ordained by God, and that no one can really help anyone else"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. The Path ... (6)). **"What you have inherited this day surpasses that of the apostles and prophets throughout the ages and is greater even than that of Moses and Peter. Blessings cannot be obtained in a day or two; they must be earned through great sacrifice. Which is to say, you must possess a love that has undergone refinement, you must possess great faith, and you must have the many truths that God requires you to attain; what is more, you must turn toward justice, without being cowed or evasive, and must have a God-loving heart that is constant unto death. You must have resolve, changes must occur in your life disposition, your corruption must be healed, you must accept all of God's orchestrations**

**without complaint, and you must be submissive even unto death. This is what you ought to attain, this is the final aim of God's work, and it is what God asks of this group of people"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Is the Work of God As Simple As Man Imagines?). Reading God's words was enlightening for me. God has predetermined how much a person will suffer in their lifetime. I had to leave my parents in God's hands and submit to His sovereignty and arrangements. I also thought of the saints over the ages who bore resounding witness for God through persecution and hardship. I accepted God's work of the last days and enjoyed the truths He expressed. I'd gained so much more than all those apostles and prophets, but when I faced persecution, I was miserable and weak—my stature was so small. Then I resolved to follow the lead of the saints, to be firm in my faith and follow God!

In 2011, a brother brought a letter saying the police went back to my house to ask my wife about my whereabouts. My wife and I haven't had contact since then.

One day in December 2012, I went out with a few brothers and sisters in the rain to share the gospel with a family. Four officers appeared, got out of a car and captured me. Two sisters on electric bikes made a run for it, and three officers chased them in their car. One officer held me tightly, and I struggled to break free. An older sister grabbed the officer to protect me, allowing me to run off. But I'd only run a dozen or so meters when the officer caught up and grabbed me, then two sisters came and held him back, allowing me to run free. My heart kept pounding after I got home and I couldn't stop thinking about what had just happened. I only escaped because those sisters held the officer back to protect me. I didn't know if they'd been arrested, if they were going to be tortured, and if the other brothers and sisters had been arrested or not. I thought about the last two



times I'd been arrested and tortured. I felt that spreading the gospel in China is so dangerous, that you could be arrested and imprisoned at any time, in any place. I was feeling pretty down, so I came before God and said a prayer. After praying, I opened up my book of God's words and saw this: **"For all people, refinement is excruciating, and very difficult to accept—yet it is during refinement that God makes plain His righteous disposition to man, and makes public His requirements for man, and provides more enlightenment and more actual pruning; through the comparison between the facts and the truth, He gives man a greater knowledge of himself and the truth, and gives man a greater understanding of God's intentions, thus allowing man to have a truer and purer love of God. Such are God's aims in carrying out refinement"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Only by Experiencing Refinement Can Man Possess True Love). **"During these last days you must bear testimony to God. No matter how great your suffering, you should walk until the very end, and even at your last breath, still you must be faithful to God and at the mercy of God; only this is truly loving God, and only this is the strong and resounding testimony"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Only by Experiencing Painful Trials Can You Know the Loveliness of God). I started to reflect on myself after reading God's words. I saw my love for God was adulterated, and I hadn't truly submitted to Him. The last two times I was arrested, I hadn't given in to Satan when I was tortured, and I'd stood firm in my testimony, so I thought I had stature, that I had some faith and submission for God. But being tempted and attacked by Satan time after time, my true stature was revealed. Being able to stand firm before wasn't my actual stature, it was because of the faith and courage God's words gave me. This time I saw that God's wisdom really is exercised based on Satan's trickery. Satan used all sorts of tricks to get me arrested

and tortured, to thoroughly defeat me and get me to betray God, but God used those situations to help me see my own faults and understand my shortcomings, and my faith and true submission were perfected through those long-term ordeals. I didn't feel as negative or miserable after understanding God's earnest intentions, and I resolved to follow Peter's example, to follow God's orchestrations in everything, and no matter what persecutions and hardships I faced, to fulfill my duty, share the gospel and bear witness for God.

Over two decades, I've been brutally arrested, persecuted, and tortured by the Communist Party, forced to flee my home and see my family broken, and I've been weak at times. God's words gave me strength time after time, and allowed me to make it to this day. I have experienced some physical suffering through these persecutions and hardships, but I grew closer to God. I also gained some actual understanding of God's wisdom, almightiness, love, and salvation. I clearly saw that the Communist Party is an anti-God satanic demon. I fully rebelled against it, abandoned it, and became resolute in following God. I have heartfelt gratitude to God for arranging all of this for me, allowing me to gain the most precious treasures in life.

## 13. Facing the Suppression of an Honest Report

By Liliana, Germany

While I was a watering group leader, Marilyn was the church leader who supervised my work. Through our interactions, I discovered that she tended to be all talk and no action when it came to implementing work. She shouted slogans instead of focusing on getting results, and she wasn't able to resolve real problems. She didn't lead us to summarize and fix the problems and deviations in our duties and she didn't fellowship on God's words and the relevant principles or point out a path of practice. All she did was lecture and scold us. When the brothers and sisters gave her suggestions, she usually wouldn't accept them. These behaviors made me feel that she might be a false leader, so I wanted to contact her superior, Jessica, to talk about it. But then I thought: "Jessica often gathers with Marilyn, and they do a lot of work together. Jessica must be able to see the problems in Marilyn that I do. Plus, Marilyn is responsible for several groups' work and oversees more than a dozen group leaders. Don't they see her problems too? Since none of them have reported anything, why should I speak up? What if I'm wrong and Jessica says that I'm biased against Marilyn and trying to find fault with her? Maybe I shouldn't stick my neck out, that way I won't get in any trouble." But then I thought of how I'd been hurt by false leaders and antichrists in the past. I hadn't reported them promptly back then either, and they'd made a mess of the work of several churches, and the lives of the brothers and sisters had been impacted. If I didn't report Marilyn's problems immediately, I wouldn't be safeguarding the interests of the church. When this occurred to me, I felt a little uneasy, and I thought that I should talk to the other brothers and sisters and see what they had to say. I went to Brother Jordan, and he said that he'd also

discovered that Marilyn couldn't resolve actual issues, that she didn't follow up on or inquire about the work, and that when it came to professional skills, she didn't guide or help the brothers and sisters to enter into the principles. He also said that she was autocratic and disorganized when assigning work, and that she was unable to prioritize tasks. The efficiency and effectiveness of the work had really suffered because of this, and things had been seriously delayed. When others warned her about this, she didn't take it seriously. During gatherings, she seldom fellowshiped on how she had reflected, gained knowledge of herself, and practiced God's words when faced with problems. She just spouted words and doctrines, saying some nice-sounding things, but not doing any actual work. When I heard that Jordan saw the same problems that I did, I felt quite certain that Marilyn was a false leader who didn't do real work. If she stayed on in her post it would bring great harm to the church's work. I realized that Marilyn's problems were serious, and that I had to report them immediately to Jessica. But then I remembered that Marilyn directly supervised my work, so if she wasn't dismissed after I spoke up, and she found out that I'd reported her, she might make my life very difficult, or even dismiss me. I would be so humiliated if I lost my position so soon after getting it. They say that "The bird that sticks its neck out is the one that gets shot," so I figured that I shouldn't be the first to report Marilyn. I decided that I'd talk to Jordan and have him bring it up instead, and then I could back up his report. That way I wouldn't be sticking my neck out. But when I tried to speak to him, I just couldn't get the words out. I thought that maybe I should just wait and see how things turned out. But God sees into people's hearts and minds, and I felt a bit uneasy about staying quiet. I just felt at fault and guilty, so I prayed to God, asking Him to enlighten me to understand myself through this matter.

Then I read a passage of God's words that shone a light on my state. God says: **"Most people wish to pursue and practice the truth, but much of the time they merely have a resolution and the desire to do so; the truth has not become their life. As a result, when they come across evil forces or encounter evil people and bad people committing evil deeds, or false leaders and antichrists doing things in a way that violates principles—thus disturbing the work of the church and harming God's chosen ones—they lose the courage to stand up and speak out. What does it mean when you have no courage? Does it mean that you are timid or inarticulate? Or is it that you do not understand thoroughly, and therefore do not have the confidence to speak up? Neither; this is primarily the consequence of being constrained by corrupt dispositions. One of the corrupt dispositions you reveal is a deceitful disposition; when something happens to you, the first thing you think of is your own interests, the first thing you consider is the consequences, whether this will be beneficial to you. This is a deceitful disposition, is it not? Another is a selfish and base disposition. You think, 'What does a loss to the interests of God's house have to do with me? I'm not a leader, so why should I care? It's got nothing to do with me. It's not my responsibility.' Such thoughts and words are not something that you consciously think, but are produced by your subconscious—which is the corrupt disposition revealed when people encounter an issue. Corrupt dispositions such as this govern the way you think, they bind your hands and feet, and control what you say. ... You have no power over what you say and do. Even if you wanted to, you could not tell the truth or say what you really think; even if you wanted to, you could not practice the truth; even if you wanted to, you could not fulfill your responsibilities. Everything you say, do, and practice is a lie, and you're**

**just perfunctory. You are wholly shackled and controlled by your satanic disposition. You may want to accept and practice the truth, but it's not up to you. When your satanic dispositions control you, you say and do whatever your satanic disposition tells you to do. You are nothing but a puppet of corrupt flesh, you have become a tool of Satan. ... You never seek the truth, let alone practice it. You are merely constantly praying, making resolutions, setting aspirations, and pledging in your heart. And what is the outcome? You remain a people pleaser, you are not forthcoming about the problems you encounter, you do not care about evil people when you see them, you do not respond when someone does evil or creates a disturbance, and you remain aloof when you are not affected personally. You think, 'I don't talk about anything that doesn't concern me. As long as it doesn't hurt my interests, my vanity, or my image, I disregard everything without exception. I have to be very careful, as the bird that sticks its neck out is the one that gets shot. I'm not going to do anything stupid!' You are totally and unwaveringly controlled by your corrupt dispositions of wickedness, deceitfulness, hardness, and aversion to the truth. They have grown harder for you to bear than the tightening golden headband worn by the Monkey King. Living under the control of corrupt dispositions is so exhausting and excruciating!"** (The Word, Vol. 3.

The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Part Three). God's words revealed my selfish and deceitful corrupt disposition. I saw that Marilyn was extremely irresponsible in her duty. She couldn't solve problems, do actual work, or accept the truth. She was autocratic in her duty and everything had to be done her way. All these behaviors confirmed that she was a false leader. If she were to carry on in her position, it would seriously impact the church's work and delay the brothers' and sisters' life entry. I knew in my heart that

this needed to be reported immediately, but I was afraid that if I offended her she'd make me regret it or dismiss me. To protect my own interests, I preferred to let harm come to the church's work rather than report her. I chose to be deceitful and get someone else to stick their neck out, so that I could jump on the bandwagon later. That way, if someone got in trouble, it wouldn't be me, and I wouldn't have to take any risks. I was living by satanic rules like: "Every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost," and "The bird that sticks its neck out is the one that gets shot." I only thought about how to protect my own interests, and not about the interests of the church or how the brothers' and sisters' lives might suffer. I was so selfish and deceitful! I had always thought that I had a sense of justice and that I could uphold the interests of the church, but this experience showed me that I was a deceitful and selfish person who bent whichever way the wind was blowing. I was living by satanic philosophies, and had failed to report a false leader. I was standing on the side of Satan and hurting God's chosen people. I was the accomplice to a false leader. I couldn't keep being a coward, I had to report the problems I saw.

Just when I'd resolved to make that report, a leader asked us to write evaluations of Marilyn and her partner. I felt really glad, thinking that this meant the leader had recognized Marilyn's issues, and I wrote out all of her behavior in great detail. But to my surprise, it was her partner who was dismissed, and Marilyn got to keep acting as a leader. A few days later, Marilyn started crying in her fellowship, saying, "I'm not doing actual work, I'm a false leader and I have no humanity. I'm not resolving the brothers' and sisters' problems, and I even oppress others. Now nobody dares to give me suggestions. I've been irresponsible as a church leader, and I've let God down. I've done so much evil, and I'm devoid of humanity. The church has given me a chance to keep doing my duty, so I must repent.

If any of you see that I have a problem, please tell me and I'll be glad to accept it." She wept so sadly as she spoke, and she seemed so genuine. I wondered: "Was I mistaken? She's not completely incapable of accepting the truth, after all. I shouldn't have expected so much of her. If she's willing to repent, she should still be able to do good work. Never mind then, since she hasn't been dismissed, I should do my best to work with her." So I sent her a message saying, "We didn't understand your struggles. Let's work together and do our duties well from now on." She responded and asked me to keep giving her suggestions and help in the future. I was so excited, thinking that if she could accept the truth and turn things around, she could be a good leader.

I was really surprised to see that she didn't make any changes whatsoever. She was still just making a lot of noise but not dealing with real problems in gatherings. During that time, some problems came up in the church's general affairs, but she only spoke about some external matters at gatherings. She didn't fellowship on how to seek the truth in that kind of environment. All this kept everyone on edge, and no one felt at ease doing their duty, which seriously disrupted the church life. After seeing all of this, I went to share my thoughts with her. To my surprise, she said, "You're the one with the problem, everyone else can just do as I say, except for you. You're the one being disruptive!" I felt negative when I heard her say that. I didn't know how to carry on in my duty, and I was really stressed. I could ignore Marilyn and get scolded by her, or I could do what she said, which would just spell trouble for the other brothers and sisters. I was really powerless—it felt like I was suffocating. I thought about reporting Marilyn's problems to Jessica, but then I remembered how I'd told the upper leaders about Marilyn before. They hadn't handled her at all, and had instead dismissed the other leader who did do some real work. If I reported



Marilyn again, would they say I was stirring up trouble, and think that I was the one with the problem? What if they accused me of something and dismissed me? While I was in that state, I felt only darkness and a sinking feeling in my heart, and I couldn't feel God's presence.

Before long, a work arrangement was issued by God's house. It mentioned that if any false leaders and workers that don't do real work, evil people, or antichrists, are discovered in the church, they must be exposed and reported to protect the interests of the church. This is a responsibility of all God's chosen people. If a leader or worker suppresses or punishes a brother or sister for reporting them, they are an antichrist. Every leader and worker also has to sign a pledge that they won't suppress anyone who files a report on them. I felt both joy and guilt when I saw that work arrangement. I was glad that God knows how small our stature is and that He was encouraging us to expose false leaders and antichrists. I also felt guilty because I knew there were false leaders and workers in the church, but I didn't dare report them because I was afraid of being suppressed or mistreated, and would rather let the church's work suffer instead. I wasn't worthy of being one of God's chosen people. So, I spoke with a couple of other group leaders about Marilyn's issues, and they agreed with me. We fellowshiped about the principles for discerning false leaders and workers together and ultimately determined that Marilyn was indeed a false leader, and that there was also a problem with the upper leaders, who were shielding her. We decided we'd all write a joint report on them. When I'd written out the report, the others told me to send it off first and not to wait for them. I started worrying again, that if Marilyn found out about the report, she might make things difficult for me. I prayed to God and asked Him to enlighten me and guide me to reflect on myself. After that, I read this in God's words: **"All of you say you are considerate of God's burden**

**and will defend the testimony of the church, but who among you has really been considerate of God's burden? Ask yourself: Are you someone who has shown consideration for His burden? Can you practice righteousness for Him? Can you stand up and speak for Me? Can you steadfastly put the truth into practice? Are you bold enough to fight against all of Satan's deeds? Would you be able to set your feelings aside and expose Satan for the sake of My truth? Can you allow My intentions to be satisfied in you? Have you offered up your heart in the most crucial of moments? Are you someone who follows My will?"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Utterances of Christ in the Beginning, Chapter 13). God's questions left me speechless. I always talked about being considerate of God's intentions and safeguarding the church's work, but when I saw that Marilyn wasn't doing real work, that she was misleading people with doctrines, acting like a dictator and running amok in her duty, and that this had a serious impact on the church life, I was overcautious and indecisive. I hadn't reported her because I wanted to protect myself, and I hadn't dared to take a stand and fight against the forces of darkness. I hadn't protected the church's work at all. I lacked the slightest shred of conscience or reason. How could I possibly face God? God's every word was a wake-up call for my numb heart, and I resolved to stop protecting myself. I had to expose and report her, even if I did end up getting suppressed because of it, so I sent out the report.

A few days later, in a co-worker meeting, Marilyn was in tears again and put on another show of "repenting." She said, "I've been working day and night, but haven't managed to get anyone's support, and I've even been reported. This is God's love for me, and I know I need to stop and reflect on myself. The brothers and sisters are helping me by reporting me, and I've signed a pledge to never suppress anyone who writes a report about me...."

Later on, she came to ask me if I had any struggles in my work and how my state was, and she didn't seem as brash as she had before—she even brought me some food. At first, I lacked discernment, thinking that maybe she really had repented. But then I thought, “I can't be taken in by a moment of niceness—I have to wait and see what happens. She cried and ‘repented’ last time, but after that nothing changed. Maybe she's being nice to me because she knows I reported her. Maybe she just wants me to say that she's changed when the leader investigates my report. She's misleading me, and I can't fall into Satan's trap and be tricked by her again.” When this occurred to me, I quickly said a prayer to God, asking Him to watch over my heart so I wouldn't be taken in by her tears like last time. I was really surprised to see her drop her mask again so quickly.

Just a few days later, we were fellowshiping truths about discerning people and she used this opportunity to say, “We can't just keep our heads down and gain knowledge of ourselves, we have to learn to discern others. Recently, the church encouraged us to write reports, and some evil people were revealed in the process. They found something to accuse the leaders and workers of, and then they used it to attack them. We need to expose those evil people, and all the ‘little flies’ that follow them. We must hold every evil person and antichrist to account.” I was pretty angry to hear her say that. I saw that all of her so-called self-knowledge was fake. She didn't know herself at all, and she was pointing the finger back at the people who had written reports on her. It reminded me of a couple passages of God's words: **“Antichrists would rather die than repent. They have no sense of shame; besides that, they are vicious and wicked of disposition, and they are averse to the truth in the extreme. Can someone who is so averse to the truth put it into practice, or repent? That would be impossible. That they are so absolutely averse to the truth means that**

**they will never repent”** (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Eight: They Would Have Others Submit Only to Them, Not the Truth or God (Part One)). **“Tell Me, do antichrists accept being pruned? Do they admit that they have a corrupt disposition? (No, they don’t admit it.) They don’t admit to having a corrupt disposition, but after they are pruned, they still pretend like they know themselves. They say they are a devil and a Satan, devoid of humanity and with poor caliber, and that they are unable to consider things thoroughly, they are unfit for the tasks arranged by the church, and they have not done their duties properly. Then, in front of a majority of people, they admit to their corrupt disposition, they admit that they are a devil, and finally, they also say that this is God refining and saving them, showing people how able they are to accept pruning and how submissive they are to the truth. They don’t mention why they are being pruned or the harm and losses their actions have caused to the church’s work. They avoid these issues and speak hollow words, doctrines, sophistries, and explanatory remarks to make people misinterpret the pruning they receive from God’s house as being undeserved and unfair, as if they have suffered some great injustice. After being pruned, they remain unyielding in their hearts, not acknowledging any of their various evil deeds in the slightest. So, what are all these words that they fellowshiped about admitting to their corrupt disposition, being willing to accept the truth, and being able to submit to pruning? Are these their true feelings? Absolutely not. They are all lies, pretense, and devilish words meant to mislead people and lure them in. What is the aim of their misleading people? (To make people worship and follow them.) Exactly, it is to mislead and lure people into following and listening to them, making everyone think that they are right and good. This way, no one sees**

through them or opposes them. On the contrary, people believe that they are someone who accepts the truth, accepts pruning, and is repentant. So, why don't they admit to their evil deeds or acknowledge the losses they have brought to the work of God's house? Why don't they bring these matters out in the open for fellowship? (If they were to say these things, people would discern them.) If people discerned them, saw through them, and saw through their humanity and their disposition essence, they would forsake them. Would they still fall for their tricks and be misled by them? Would they still hold them in high esteem? Would they still praise them to the skies? Would they still worship them? They wouldn't do any of this. Antichrists pretend to know themselves, but in reality, it is all sophistry and self-explanations, all to mislead people and make people stand up for them, which is their ulterior motive. They evade important matters and talk lightly about knowing themselves and accepting pruning to mislead people and lure them in, to make people esteem and worship them. Isn't this method quite wicked? Some people truly fall for it, and after being misled by the antichrists, they say, 'That person speaks so well—I was very inspired. I cried several times!' At the time, these people highly worship and esteem them, but in the end they turn out to be antichrists; this is the consequence of antichrists misleading others and luring them in" (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Excursus Five: Summarizing the Character of Antichrists and Their Disposition Essence (Part Two)). Antichrists are incredibly arrogant and conceited by nature, and they never accept the truth. They are averse to and hate it. No matter how many bitter failures they experience, they refuse to repent or change. They're skilled at misleading people with illusions, and they are incredibly insidious and deceitful. By understanding this, my discernment of Marilyn grew. When she got

reported, she cried and talked about self-knowledge, saying that the reports were God's love and that she would reflect on herself. She said she lacked humanity and had let God down, and she vowed to repent. She even asked for more feedback. But that was all fake, it was all lies intended to deceive people. She used these external displays to mislead us, so that everyone would think that she could accept being pruned and that she was able to submit to the truth. But she never truly addressed the behaviors that showed that she was a false leader, like how she didn't do real work, how she was autocratic in her duty, and how she'd hurt the work of the church. She just said a few words about lacking humanity, and never dissected the ways in which she'd displayed that lack of humanity. She never shared details of how she'd gained knowledge of her own corrupt disposition, and she did not bear witness to God's righteousness. So people looked up to and sympathized with her, thinking that she had stature and that she would treat those who reported her properly. Her fellowship was by no means genuine self-knowledge, she just wanted to mislead people and keep their support so that she could hold her position. But that facade was short-lived. As soon as she got the chance, she turned things around on the people who'd reported her, dropping that hypocritical, repentant veneer of hers. She escalated things by publicly condemning us and taking her revenge. This thoroughly exposed her true self, her hatred of the truth, and her vicious nature. She was an evil person who hated and was averse to the truth in her nature essence. She wasn't just a false leader, she had the essence of an antichrist.

After that, I found out that Marilyn and her crew were preparing materials to clear out Jordan from the church, who had often given Marilyn suggestions. When another leader said that Jordan didn't meet the criteria for being cleared out, they claimed that she was a false leader and dismissed her. They also found excuses to dismiss the two other group leaders who

had reported Marilyn with me. I only avoided being dismissed because the brothers and sisters voted to keep me in place. The church held its annual election right after that, and, to my surprise, the people who had been reported were all chosen to be leaders and workers again. Those close to them, including Marilyn's little sister, all got leadership roles too. I felt a little confused and didn't understand how things could have turned out that way. They had clearly made a mess of the church's work, so how could they be elected as leaders and workers again? I even started to suspect that the church was just like the secular world, that it was all about relationships and power. When I thought this, darkness filled my heart and I lost my drive to do my duty. I just wanted to crawl into a corner where no one could see me. I even started to develop doubts about God's righteousness. I pretty much stopped speaking in gatherings and didn't share any opinions. I was on my guard against everyone and just did my duty robotically. Sometimes I even wondered: "Should I suck up to them too? If I apologize, say that I was wrong, and smooth things over, they might forget about my report. That way, at least, I won't get cleared out of the church."

One day, I heard a reading of God's words: **"I take pleasure in those who are not suspicious of others, and I like those who readily accept the truth; toward these two kinds of people I show great care, for in My eyes they are honest people. If you are deceitful, then you will be guarded and suspicious toward all people and matters, and thus your faith in Me will be built upon a foundation of suspicion. I could never acknowledge such faith. Lacking true faith, you are even more devoid of true love. And if you are liable to doubt God and speculate about Him at will, then you are, without question, the most deceitful of all people. You speculate whether God can be like man: unpardonably sinful, of petty character, devoid of fairness and reason, lacking a sense**

of justice, given to vicious tactics, treacherous and cunning, pleased by evil and darkness, and so on. Is not the reason that people have such thoughts because they lack the slightest knowledge of God? Such faith is nothing short of sin! There are even some who believe that the ones who please Me are precisely those who flatter and bootlick, and that those lacking in such skills will be unwelcome in the house of God and will lose their place there. Is this the only knowledge you have acquired after all these years? Is this what you have gained? And your knowledge of Me does not stop at these misunderstandings; even worse is your blasphemy against God's Spirit and vilification of Heaven. This is why I say that such faith as yours will only cause you to stray further from Me and be in greater opposition against Me. Throughout many years of work, you have seen many truths, but do you know what My ears have heard? How many among you are willing to accept the truth? You all believe you are willing to pay the price for the truth, but how many of you have truly suffered for the truth? There is nothing but unrighteousness in your hearts, which makes you think that everyone, no matter who they are, is equally deceitful and crooked—to the point that you even believe that God incarnate could, like a normal person, be without a kind heart or benevolent love. More than that, you believe that a noble character and a merciful, benevolent nature exist only within the God in heaven. You believe that such a saint does not exist, that only darkness and evil reign on earth, while God is something with which people entrust their longing for the good and beautiful, a legendary figure fabricated by them. ... You regard all deeds of Christ from the standpoint of the unrighteous and evaluate all His work, as well as His identity and essence, from the perspective of the evil. You have made a grave mistake and done that which has never been done



**by those coming before you. That is, you serve only the lofty God in heaven with a crown upon His head, and never attend to the God whom you regard as so insignificant that He is invisible to you. Is this not your sin? Is this not a classic example of your offense against the disposition of God?"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. How to Know the God on Earth). Hearing God's judgment, I felt very ashamed. When things happened that didn't accord with my notions, I didn't seek the truth, instead I doubted God's righteousness. I suspected that the powerful shielded each other and that darkness ruled in God's house. Wasn't I suspecting that God loved evil and darkness, just like humans? That was an absurd way to look at things! God is holy and righteous, and truth and righteousness rule in His house. Even though false leaders and antichrists may get their way for a little while in the church, and be able to mislead and control some people, they'll never gain a real foothold here—God will expose and eliminate them eventually. God allows those people to appear in the church so that His chosen people can develop real discernment and see the evil face of God-resisting Satan through them, and then renounce them and be freed from their misleading and control. That's the wisdom of God's work. But when I saw the church being controlled by false leaders and antichrists and how they punished and suppressed the others, I was cautious and guarded, afraid that they'd suppress me too. I was too scared to speak to the brothers and sisters, terrified that I'd say the wrong thing and give the antichrists something to use against me, and then be dismissed or expelled. In order to protect myself, I even thought about employing a secular philosophy for worldly dealings and sucking up to them. I was really cowardly and didn't have any backbone at all. I was denying God's righteousness, refusing to believe that the truth and Christ ruled in His house. These words of God in particular really pierced my heart: **"And your knowledge of Me does not**

**stop at these misunderstandings; even worse is your blasphemy against God's Spirit and vilification of Heaven. This is why I say that such faith as yours will only cause you to stray further from Me and be in greater opposition against Me."** I was blaspheming and slandering God with my absurd views. I didn't have any real understanding of God in my faith. After I was suppressed by those false leaders and antichrists, I didn't really seek the truth to gain discernment or stand up and fight against the antichrists' evil forces, instead I doubted the righteousness of God's house. That was evil of me! False leaders and antichrists can only appear in the church with God's permission. He uses them to set up a real lesson for us, so that we can seek the truth and gain discernment. I needed to seek the truth and learn my lesson through this environment. Realizing this, I knelt down and prayed to God. I said, "God, I want to repent to You. Please give me faith. No matter what sort of situation I face after this, I'll rely on You to get through it." I felt a sense of release after my prayer.

One day, Marilyn's little sister told me that I'd been reported by some brothers and sisters, and they had to temporarily suspend me from my duty. She didn't say what I'd been reported for, she just told me to reflect on myself. She also said that if anyone asked me why I had been dismissed, I couldn't say anything. All of this happened so suddenly, and I felt really overwhelmed. I was completely stunned and my mind was blank. I went home and sat there in a daze, thinking and thinking. Were they going to expel me from the church? When they cleared Jordan out, first they used his old age as an excuse to get him to stop doing his duty, then they gathered the materials needed to clear him out. I had no idea what I'd do if they used that tactic against me, too. I was so afraid. Sometimes I looked at it more optimistically, thinking that maybe someone really had reported me, and that after their investigation, they might let me gather and do a duty again. I

kept swinging back and forth between optimism and pessimism. I felt like my head was about to explode. I was miserable, and it felt like there was a great weight on my chest. I didn't know how to get through that situation and I was having doubts about God's sovereignty again. I rushed to pray, asking God to watch over me so I wouldn't lose faith in Him or doubt His work. I knew that God was allowing this to happen to me, and that it would be beneficial for my life. I wanted to calm down and really seek the truth. During that time, I read a lot of God's words about understanding God's sovereignty and going through trials, and I realized that God was allowing all of this to happen. No matter how savage an antichrist or an evil person was, they couldn't do anything to me without God's permission. I couldn't tell what those false leaders and antichrists were going to do, but I should learn to wait and seek, and at the very least, not blame God or allow Satan to mock me. Even if they really did expel me, I couldn't give up my faith, and I still had to do my duty by sharing the gospel. I didn't feel as weak and afraid when I thought about it that way.

After a couple weeks or so went by, Marilyn's little sister asked me to write an assessment of Sister Jenn, who had reported Marilyn with me. I realized that they were probably preparing the materials to expel her from the church, so I calmly thought back in detail about everything that had happened, and all the things that Marilyn and the others had done. I felt like I had more discernment over them. I read a passage of God's word: **“What is the main objective of an antichrist when they attack and exclude a dissenter? They seek to create a situation in the church where there are no voices contrary to their own, in which their power, their leadership status, and their words are all absolute. Everyone must heed them, and even if they have a difference of opinion, they must not express it, but let it fester in their heart. Anyone who dares to openly disagree with**

**them becomes the antichrist's enemy, and they will think of any way they can to make things hard for them, and can't wait to make them disappear. This is one of the ways that antichrists attack and exclude a dissenter in order to shore up their status and protect their power. They think, 'It's fine for you to have different opinions, but you can't go around talking about them as you please, much less compromise my power and status. If you have something to say, you can say it to me in private. If you say it in front of everyone and cause me to lose face, you are asking for trouble, and I'll have to take care of you!' What kind of disposition is this? Antichrists do not permit others to speak freely. If they have an opinion—whether about the antichrist or anything else—they cannot just bring it up at random; they must consider the antichrist's face. If not, the antichrist will brand them an enemy, and attack and exclude them. What kind of nature is this? It is the nature of an antichrist. And why do they do this? They do not allow the church to have any alternative voices, they do not permit any dissenters in the church, they do not allow God's chosen ones to openly fellowship the truth and discern people. What they fear most is being exposed and discerned by people; they are constantly trying to consolidate their power and the status they have in people's hearts, which they feel must never be shaken. They could never tolerate anything that threatens or affects their pride, reputation, or status and value as a leader. Is this not a manifestation of the malicious nature of antichrists? Not content with the power they already possess, they consolidate and secure it and seek eternal domination. Not only do they want to control others' behavior, but also their hearts” (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Two: They Attack and Exclude Dissenters). I saw from God's words that in order to solidify their power and position in the church, antichrists will suppress and**

punish anyone who disagrees with them or reports them. Weren't Marilyn and her crew exactly like the antichrists that God described? When some brothers and sisters saw them clearly and reported them, Marilyn's gang found something to use against them and had them dismissed. They monitored all those who had discernment of them, and condemned and expelled anyone who pushed back against them. They had even arranged for their relatives and the people they valued to take up positions as leaders and workers. They had already ganged up to form a faction. Things were even worse than when we'd written that report—they were a bona fide gang of antichrists! If I didn't report their evil deeds, not only would the church's work suffer, all of the brothers and sisters in the church would be harmed. But the thought of reporting them again scared me. I thought, "They all have leadership roles, and I've already been dismissed and suspended from attending gatherings. If I report them again, will the others believe me? If they get their hands on my report like they did before, not only would nothing good come of it, they might even expel me from the church. That would be the end of me!" The thought of being expelled sent a chill over me. But then I thought about how they'd already severely disrupted the church's work, and that they were still on their rampage of suppressing and punishing the brothers and sisters. If I was too afraid of them to write a report, and let them keep running amok, who knows how many more brothers and sisters would suffer. That would be a serious transgression before God and He would surely detest and abandon me. I could hardly eat or sleep over those few days. Later, Brother Max called me and asked exactly what we'd written in our report, and what I thought of the situation now. I said, "Let's just wait and see." He replied, "Do you think that Marilyn will really leave you be if you don't take a stand and report her now? This isn't a personal matter, it involves the church's work. Give it

some thought.” After getting off the phone, I couldn’t stop thinking about what he said. I felt really suffocated and didn’t know what to do. One moment, I’d want to fight and write another report, and the next moment, I’d think of my future and fate, and worry about being expelled and how my life of faith might come to an end. I was really in a state of turmoil. Then I saw a passage of God’s words: **“Until people have experienced God’s work and understood the truth, it is Satan’s nature that takes charge and dominates them from within. What, specifically, does that nature entail? For example, why are you selfish? Why do you protect your own position? Why do you have such strong feelings? Why do you enjoy those unrighteous things? Why do you like those evils? What is the basis for your fondness for such things? Where do these things come from? Why are you so happy to accept them? By now, you have all come to understand that the main reason behind all these things is that Satan’s poison is within man. So what is Satan’s poison? How can it be expressed? For example, if you ask, ‘How should people live? What should people live for?’ people will answer, ‘Every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost.’ This single phrase expresses the very root of the problem. Satan’s philosophy and logic have become people’s lives. No matter what people pursue, they do so for themselves—and so they live only for themselves. ‘Every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost’—this is the life philosophy of man, and it also represents human nature. These words have already become the nature of corrupt mankind and they are the true portrait of corrupt mankind’s satanic nature. This satanic nature has already become the basis for corrupt mankind’s existence. For several thousand years, corrupt mankind has lived by this venom of Satan, right up to the present day”** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. How to Walk the

Path of Peter). Thinking that over, I could see that I protected myself over and over and didn't dare to report Marilyn because I was living by satanic poisons like: "The bird that sticks its neck out is the one that gets shot," "Sensible people are good at self-protection, seeking only to avoid making mistakes," "Let things drift if they do not affect one personally," and "Every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost." Those satanic poisons had taken root deep in my bones and blood; I only thought about myself in everything I said and did, and I was incredibly selfish and deceitful. Back before I became a believer, I never wanted to do anything that would offend someone, whether it be at work or in my personal life. Even after joining the church, I kept living by these satanic philosophies, protecting myself at every turn instead of practicing the truth. I knew that Marilyn and the others were a gang of antichrists and that I should stand on God's side and report them. Yet, I only thought of my own future and fate, without considering the church's work or the brothers' and sisters' lives. How was that bearing witness to God? I was doing evil!

Later, I started giving thought to why I'd been so afraid of them. Could they decide my fate? Wasn't my future and fate entirely in God's hands? Wasn't it foolish of me to be so scared of antichrists' evil forces? I thought of God's words: **"God's expression of His wrath is a symbol that all wicked forces will cease to exist, and it is a symbol that all hostile forces will be destroyed. This is the uniqueness of God's righteous disposition, and of God's wrath. When God's dignity and holiness are challenged, when the forces of justice are obstructed and unseen by man, then God will send forth His wrath. Because of God's essence, all those forces on earth which contest God, oppose Him and contend with Him, are wicked, corrupt and unjust; they come from and belong to Satan. Because God is just and is of the light and flawlessly holy, thus all**

**things wicked, corrupt and belonging to Satan will vanish when God's wrath is unleashed"** (The Word, Vol. 2. On Knowing God. God Himself, the Unique II).

God's house isn't like the secular world—it's ruled by God. He is the truth and He is righteous, He is a symbol of all that's bright, good and beautiful. No dark and evil forces of Satan like antichrists and evil people can gain a real foothold here, they will all be cursed and punished by God. There was no reason for me to be so frightened and worried. False leaders and antichrists are in God's hands, too. Even if they really expelled me, it would be something that I needed to experience. I knew that I couldn't be afraid of them anymore, I had to practice the truth, take a stand, and report them. So I called Jenn to discuss writing a report with her, and she told me that Marilyn and her crew were gathering materials to have me expelled at that very moment. I already knew that they'd probably find a way to expel me, but actually hearing that was such a shock that I broke into a cold sweat. After that call, I thought of a passage of God's words: **"If a church contains no one who is willing to practice the truth and no one who can stand firm in their testimony to God, then that church should be completely isolated, and its connections with other churches must be severed. This is called 'burying death'; this is what it means to spurn Satan. If a church contains several local bullies, and they are followed by 'little flies' that entirely lack discernment, and if people in such a church, even after having seen the truth, are still incapable of rejecting the binds and manipulation of these bullies, then all those fools will be eliminated in the end. These little flies might not have done anything terrible, but they are even more deceitful, even more slick and evasive, and everyone like this will be eliminated. Not a single one shall remain! Those who belong to Satan will be returned to Satan, while those who belong to God will surely go in search of the truth; this is decided by**



**their natures. Let all those who follow Satan perish! No pity will be shown to such people. Let those who search for the truth be provided for, and may they take pleasure in God's word to their hearts' content. God is righteous; He would not show favoritism to anyone. If you are a devil, then you are incapable of practicing the truth; if you are someone who searches for the truth, then it is certain that you will not be taken captive by Satan. This is beyond all doubt"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. A Warning to Those Who Do Not Practice the Truth). After reading God's words, I could really feel God's holy and righteous disposition that tolerates no offense from man. God wouldn't allow false leaders and antichrists to disrupt the church's work or hurt His chosen people. God hates those who don't practice the truth or uphold the church's work when false leaders and antichrists appear. If those people don't repent, they're bound to be eliminated and punished. If I failed to practice the truth when faced with Marilyn's gang of false leaders and antichrists, and didn't take a stand to report them, wouldn't that mean that I was standing on Satan's side and letting them disrupt the church's work? Then I'd also have a part in their evil! I was enjoying the truth that God had bestowed upon us and eating and drinking what He had provided for me, but when antichrists were frenziedly disrupting the church's work and suppressing God's chosen people, I didn't safeguard the church's work. I was taking the side of the enemy. That was a serious betrayal of God, and something that He condemns. Just like God said: **"Let all those who follow Satan perish!"** It was only then that I felt truly afraid. If I didn't repent, then even if I wasn't expelled, I'd be condemned and eliminated along with the false leaders and antichrists. When I realized this, I came before God to pray. I said, "God, I want to repent to You, and stop being overcautious and protecting myself. I want to practice the truth, and not be constrained by Satan's dark forces. I want to

take a stand and protect the church's work. I know that I have to report those antichrists, and write out everything that I know, even if I do end up getting expelled." After that, another sister helped me to deliver my report directly to an upper leader. An investigation was conducted, and Marilyn and the others were determined to be antichrists and they were suspended from their duties. They didn't give up after that and secretly colluded to make a desperate last stand. They tried to mislead the brothers and sisters into covering up the evidence of their evildoing, and even spied on the sister who handled the report on them. In the end, that entire gang of antichrists was expelled from the church and the brothers and sisters who had been suppressed and condemned were able to live a normal church life and do their duties again.

Through all of this, I truly felt God's righteous and unoffendable disposition, and saw that God's house is ruled by the truth, God, and righteousness. No matter how savage Satan is or how powerful it appears to be, it's still just a tool that God uses to perfect His chosen people. God's words say: **"We always speak of how wicked, vicious, and malicious Satan is, that Satan is averse to and hates the truth, but can you see this? Can you see what Satan does in the spiritual realm? How it speaks and acts, what its attitude toward the truth and God is, where its wickedness lies—you can see none of these things. So, no matter how we say that Satan is wicked, that it resists God, and that it is averse to the truth, in your mind, this is merely a statement. There is no true image to it. It is too hollow, and it is impractical; it cannot serve as a practical reference. But when one has come into contact with an antichrist, they see Satan's wicked, vicious disposition and its essence of being averse to the truth a bit more clearly, and their understanding of Satan is a bit more incisive and practical. Without these real figures**

and examples for people to come into contact with and see, their so-called understanding of the truth would be indistinct, hollow, and impractical. But when people come into real contact with these antichrists and evil people, they can see how they do evil and resist God, and they can identify the nature essence of Satan. They see that these evil people and antichrists are Satan incarnate—that they are living Satans, living devils. Contact with antichrists and evil people can have such an effect. When Satan incarnates as an evil person or antichrist, the capabilities of its fleshly body are only so great, yet it can still do so many bad things, and cause so much trouble, and be so wicked and insidious in conduct and in deed. Therefore, the evil that Satan in the spiritual realm does must be a hundred or a thousand times greater than the sum of that done by all evil people and antichrists that live in the flesh. So, the lessons people learn by coming into contact with evil people and antichrists are of great help to them developing discernment and seeing the face of Satan clearly. They enable people to learn to discern what things are positive and what things are negative, what is loathed by God and what is pleasing to Him, what is the truth and what is fallacy, what is justice and what is wickedness, what exactly God hates and what exactly He loves, and which people God rejects and eliminates and which He approves of and gains. It is useless to try to understand these questions in terms of doctrines alone. One must experience many things, especially the misleading and disturbance of evil people and antichrists. It is not until one has true discernment that they can understand these many truths and come to a deeper and more practical understanding of what God requires and what He wants to gain. Doesn't this lead to a greater understanding of God's intentions? Can't it make you surer that God is

**the truth and the One which is most lovely? (Yes.) God has people learn lessons and develop discernment in the course of experiencing things, and He is certainly training people, as well, while also revealing people of each sort. When some people encounter an evil person or an antichrist, they do not dare to expose or identify them, and they do not dare to come into contact with them. They are afraid, and just try to avoid them, as if they had seen a venomous snake. Such people are too spineless to learn lessons, and they will not develop discernment. Some people who encounter an evil person or an antichrist do not pay attention to learning lessons or gaining discernment; they let their hotheadedness guide their treatment of them, and when the time comes to expose and identify an antichrist, they cannot be of use or do anything practical. Some people see an antichrist doing a great deal of evil, and they feel averse toward it at heart, but they feel there is nothing at all that they can do about it, that their hands are tied. They are consequently toyed with arbitrarily by the antichrist, and they keep enduring this and resign themselves to it. They allow the antichrist to act recklessly and disturb the work of the church, and they do not report or expose them. They have failed in their responsibility and duty as humans. In short, when evil people and antichrists wreak havoc and do as they will, this reveals people of all sorts, and of course, it also serves to train those who pursue the truth and have a sense of justice, enabling them to grow in discernment and insight, learn something, and understand God's intentions from this. Which of God's intentions do they come to understand? They are made to see that God does not save antichrists, but simply uses them to render service, and that when antichrists are done rendering their service, God reveals and eliminates them, and ultimately punishes them, for they are evil people and of**

**Satan. Those whom God saves are a group of people who, despite their corrupt dispositions, love positive things, and recognize that God is the truth, and submit to His sovereignty and arrangements, and who, having committed a transgression, are able to truly repent. These people can accept being pruned, being judged and chastised, and even more so they can approach it correctly when other people expose them or point out their issues. Those who, no matter how God works, can accept it and submit to it, and learn something from it—such is the group of people who truly follow God, experience His work, and are gained by Him”** (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Nine (Part Eight)). Through being suppressed by those antichrists, I got a real look at how evil and cruel they are in nature. They’ll condemn and expel anyone who has discernment of them, or who doesn’t listen to them, reports them, or threatens their position. What’s more, they don’t have any conscience or reason at all. No matter how much evil they do or how many people they suppress, no matter how many times they’re pruned and exposed, they don’t have a shred of regret or repentance. I saw that antichrists are averse to and hate the truth in their essence. They are enemies of God, demons reincarnated on earth. I also personally experienced that if you fear their power and don’t dare to expose and report them, you just end up being suppressed, punished, and hurt. You have to stand on God’s side and use His words and the truth to fight them. You have to report and renounce them and drive them out of the church. That’s the only way to escape their power and control, and triumph over Satan. It was entirely thanks to God’s words that I was able to gain all of this! Thank God!

## **14. Reflections on Following a Person While Believing in God**

By Xiaolu, China

Of all my experiences, there is one in particular which left a deep impression on me. One year, Li Juan, an upper leader, came to our church to oversee our work. At the time, a church member was spreading biases against the leaders and workers, and forming a faction to disturb the church. We fellowshiped with him many times, but he didn't repent. We weren't sure if we should define him as an antichrist, so we asked Li Juan. Li Juan used truths about how to discern antichrists to fellowship with us on how to determine this, giving us a way forward. I also learned in our talks that when Li Juan was a new leader, she took care of some chaos in the church in just two weeks that others hadn't solved in two months. Now as an upper leader, she'd overseen the work of many churches and resolved many of their issues. Before I knew it, I started looking up to her. After that, my partner and I ran into issues we didn't understand, so we waited for Li Juan to come and give us guidance. A month later, she finally came back to our church. I shared the issues and difficulties we were facing right away and she quickly fixed things again. I really admired Li Juan after a few encounters with her. I felt she deserved to be an upper leader, that she understood the truth and had discernment. The problems I simply couldn't resolve were easy for her to take care of. I hoped she could come to guide us more often. To my surprise, Li Juan was dismissed a couple months later for being arrogant, autocratic in her duties, disruptive to the church's work, and because she did not accept being pruned. Her dismissal was inconceivable to me, but I thought it could be a good thing for her. If she could learn about herself and change, then she could take on important

work again. So even though she'd been dismissed, the place she held in my heart didn't change at all.

A few months later, the church assigned Li Juan and I to be responsible for cleansing work. I was thrilled. I wanted to make good use of this chance to learn more from her. Later when we were discussing some issues, she was always able to find relevant principles to fellowship on and resolve the issues. She also talked a lot about her becoming a leader shortly after joining the faith, how the work had improved thanks to her hard work, how she'd learned about herself after her dismissal, and that the church was giving her important work again. Hearing all this made me look up to her even more, and I always went to her with my questions. She always had an answer. Over time, I stopped focusing on prayer and seeking God in my duty, and relied on Li Juan for everything instead, thinking whatever she said was right. At the time I thought too much of her. I blindly adulated her, and nearly went along with her in committing a great evil.

One day, I learned that when Zhang Ping was a leader before, she said some judgmental things to her family about her partner, because she was biased against her partner. Then her family repeated these things in a group gathering. The church leader labeled Zhang Ping as an antichrist because of that one thing. Her family felt like handling it that way wasn't in line with the principles, so they wrote a letter to report it. But then the church leader labeled Zhang Ping's whole family as a gang of antichrists and isolated them. Looking at Zhang Ping's expulsion documents, I saw that she was just living within a corrupt disposition and said some judgmental things. She shouldn't have been labeled as an antichrist. Her family made that report just to point out a problem, they didn't form a faction or disturb church work. They shouldn't have been called antichrists. Also, I'd interacted with Zhang Ping a few years prior. She had acceptable humanity

and didn't seem like an evildoer. I wondered if the leader had made a mistake in calling her an antichrist and expelling her. That's not a small issue. I wanted to get Li Juan's help in thinking it over again. But surprisingly, she said very decisively, "Zhang Ping was judgmental of her partner, and that's an evil deed. Her family spoke out on her behalf and filed a report, so they're a gang of antichrists. We can look and see whether they did any other evil deeds." I felt like it wasn't right for her to be so decisive, but then I thought if Li Juan was that certain, she must really have a handle on things. After all, she'd served as an upper leader, had a lot of experience, and great discernment. She must know the truth and see things better than me. So I changed my tune, saying, "I haven't been in contact with Zhang Ping for a few years. I don't know if she's committed other evil deeds. Let's look into it and then decide." Before long, we got more information on Zhang Ping. She hadn't done any other evil deeds, and after judging her partner she reflected on herself and learned about herself. Her family wasn't getting others to advocate for Zhang Ping, either. Based on their behavior, they shouldn't have been labeled as antichrists and expelled. I shared this information with Li Juan, but she was really disdainful and thought labeling Zhang Ping as an antichrist wasn't wrong. She said, "If we leave antichrists in the church and they keep doing evil and being disruptive, we have a part in their evil!" Another sister didn't agree with Li Juan, either. She also said that they weren't a gang of antichrists, but had just shown some corruption, and we should take them back into the church immediately. Li Juan still said confidently, "Even if Zhang Ping isn't an antichrist, she's an evildoer. She maligned her co-worker in front of her family, and then her family shared it at a gathering and made a report. Isn't that disturbing the church? We can't re-admit them! We have to learn more about their evildoing." I felt kind of hesitant after hearing what Li Juan said. She was so certain Zhang



Ping should be expelled. Did that mean I had a limited perspective on this? Was Zhang Ping really an evildoer? Li Juan had been a leader for so long, so she had to have a broader view on things than us. I figured I lacked discernment and that we could keep looking into what Zhang Ping had done. So, although I didn't feel entirely at ease, I still steeled myself and had some brothers and sisters inquire into the matter further. I felt really uneasy after making these arrangements, and my heart became dark. I can't really describe how it felt. I prayed to God, asking Him to guide me to know myself through this, and to be able to act in line with His intention. I read this in God's words after my prayer: **"Every church and every individual is observed by God. No matter how many people there are performing a duty or following God in a church, the moment they depart from God's words, the moment they lose the work of the Holy Spirit, they cease to experience the work of God, and thus they—and the duty they are performing—have no connection to and no part in God's work, in which case this church has become a religious group. Tell Me, what are the consequences once a church becomes a religious group? Wouldn't you say these people are in great danger? They never seek the truth when faced with problems and they don't act according to the truth principles, but are subject to the arrangements and manipulations of human beings. There are even many who, while performing their duty, never pray or seek the truth principles; they only ask others and do as others say, acting on cues from others. Whatever other people tell them to do, that's what they do. They feel that praying to God about their problems and truth-seeking is vague and difficult, so they look for a simple, easy solution. They figure that relying on others and doing what others say is easy and most realistic, and so they simply do what other people say, asking others and doing**

**as they say in everything. As a result, even after believing for many years, when faced with a problem, they have never once come before God, praying and seeking His desires and the truth, and then achieving an understanding of the truth, and acting and behaving according to God's intentions—they've never had such an experience. Do such people really practice faith in God?"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Only With Fear of God Can One Tread Upon the Path of Salvation). God's words show that when He doesn't have a place in someone's heart and they don't seek the truth principles, choosing instead to listen to other people and follow their plans, that's not practicing faith in God; God doesn't acknowledge that kind of belief. Wasn't that precisely my state? In the matter of Zhang Ping's family, Li Juan said she was certain they were a gang of antichrists. I felt like that wasn't in line with the facts, but I held her in such high esteem that I didn't seek the truth principles. I went along with whatever she told me to do. I realized from the results of our inquiry that their family had been improperly labeled, but seeing how persistent Li Juan was, I totally disregarded my own views. Even though I felt uncomfortable, I still didn't seek the truth principles. I just forced myself to do what Li Juan said. God had no place in my heart. How was that having faith? The more I thought about it, the worse I felt. I'd always thought of myself as a true believer. I never imagined I would adore and follow a person. I felt uneasy, which meant I'd already been spurned by God. If I didn't repent I could really be eliminated. This thought left me feeling scared, so I said a prayer asking God to help me turn my state around, seek the truth and be able to treat Zhang Ping and her family in a principled way.

After that I looked for the truth principles which related to Zhang Ping's issue, and learned the difference between an antichrist and someone with a regular corrupt disposition. The main trait of antichrists is that they

see power as life, and always want to control God's chosen ones. They punish people to gain power. They do so much evil, and seriously disturb the church's work. Also, antichrists are averse to and hate the truth. They are in essence evil people, and have no conscience or sense. They feel no regret, regardless of how much evil they've done, and there is no chance they will repent. Regular corrupt people can't help but say and do things for the sake of fame, gain and status, but they can accept the truth and reflect on themselves. After taking the wrong path, they can become aware of themselves, and show repentance. It is just as God says: **"No matter who they are, no matter how much evil they did, or how serious their errors were, whether a person is determined to be an antichrist or to possess the disposition of an antichrist depends on whether they are able to accept the truth and being pruned, and whether they possess true remorse. If they can accept the truth and accept being pruned, if they possess true remorse, and if they are willing to spend their whole life laboring for God, then this truly indicates a bit of repentance. A person like this cannot be classified as an antichrist"** (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Nine (Part Three)). I knew in my heart that Zhang Ping wasn't an antichrist, and I couldn't keep vacillating and blindly listening to Li Juan.

I continued seeking. Why was it that when Li Juan and I saw things differently, I didn't seek the principles, and just blindly went along with her? What was the root of this problem? I remembered that God says: **"What you admire is not the humility of Christ, but those false shepherds of prominent standing. You do not adore the loveliness or wisdom of Christ, but those libertines who wallow in the filth of the world. You laugh at the pain of Christ who has no place to lay His head, but you admire those corpses that hunt for offerings and live in debauchery. You are not willing to suffer alongside Christ, but you**

**gladly throw yourself into the arms of those reckless antichrists, though they only supply you with flesh, words, and control. Even now, your heart still turns toward them, toward their reputation, toward their status, toward their influence. And yet you continue to hold an attitude of finding the work of Christ hard to swallow and being unwilling to accept it. This is why I say that you lack the faith to acknowledge Christ”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Are You a True Believer in God?).

Reading God’s words, I saw that I adored and followed a person because I didn’t honor Christ as great in my faith; instead, I adored status and power. Since Li Juan had been an upper leader and she had some good solutions when she was overseeing work, I thought she knew the truth and had discernment, so I looked up to her and admired her. That’s why I didn’t have my own ideas or opinions when we were partners. I’d do whatever she said, entirely taking her words as the truth. Even in something as important as whether Zhang Ping and her family should be expelled, I still blindly followed Li Juan. This delayed that family from being taken back into the church, and delayed their life entry. God cherishes each and every person’s life. Those oppressed by false leaders are unable to live a life of the church for a long time. They live in darkness, and are helpless and in pain. But I wasn’t considering God’s intentions; I wasn’t taking responsibility for others’ lives. In the matter of Zhang Ping’s family, I always swayed back and forth and listened to Li Juan. I was incredibly muddled! Without that spiritual darkness and pain I wouldn’t have woken up; I would have kept doing wrong. I prayed to God in repentance, “God! I don’t want to keep adulating and following a person. I want to honor You as great, and act according to the truth principles.” Later on, I shared my opinion with Li Juan, and she said curtly, “Let’s discuss it later.” Then she changed the topic. I could see she was still sticking to her own view and didn’t care

about others' lives. I was incensed. I resolved that no matter what, I had to tell our leader about the situation with Zhang Ping's family. The leader came to carry out some work a few days later and revealed that Li Juan had been autocratic in the cleansing work. She had arbitrarily labeled people without adhering to the principles, and seriously disturbed church work. Therefore, the leader dismissed Li Juan. Apparently in Zhang Ping's case, Li Juan was well aware she was wrong, but didn't want to admit it. She personally arranged for people to get information on Zhang Ping to find fault with her. She was dead set on getting Zhang Ping and her family expelled as antichrists. I was so angry. To protect her status, she didn't care about the brothers' and sisters' lives. She was incredibly vicious. Thinking back on my time with Li Juan, she was always talking about all her hard work, so I took her for someone who pursues the truth. I didn't use the truth to dissect the motives and essence of her actions. Really sharing experience means talking about what you've come to know about yourself through God's judgment and chastisement, what truths you've learned, and how you've practiced the truth to satisfy God. But Li Juan couldn't talk about true understanding. Those tough times she talked about were all to exalt and bear witness to herself, and to gain admiration. She was on an antichrist's path. At this point, I gained some discernment over Li Juan and I hated myself even more. I'd been a believer for years, but didn't look at people or things through God's words. I just looked at people's gifts and caliber, and adored status and power. I nearly went along with Li Juan in doing evil, expelling people wrongly, and causing irreparable damage. I was so blind and foolish! At this thought I started to feel afraid.

Later on, I read another passage of God's words: **“When someone is elected to be a leader by the brothers and sisters, or is promoted by the house of God to do a certain piece of work or perform a certain duty,**

**this does not mean that they have a special status or position, or that the truths they understand are deeper and more numerous than those of other people—much less that this person is able to submit to God, and will not betray Him. Certainly, it does not mean, either, that they know God, and are someone who fears God. They have attained none of this, in fact. The promotion and cultivation is merely promotion and cultivation in the straightforward sense, and is not equivalent to them having been predestined and approved of by God. Their promotion and cultivation simply means they have been promoted, and await cultivation. And the ultimate outcome of this cultivation depends on whether this person pursues the truth, and on whether they are capable of choosing the path of pursuing the truth. Thus, when someone in the church is promoted and cultivated to be a leader, they are merely promoted and cultivated in the straightforward sense; it does not mean that they are already an up-to-standard leader, or a competent one, that they are already capable of undertaking the work of a leader, and can do real work—that is not the case. Most people cannot see through to these things, and based on their own imaginings they look up to those who have been promoted. This is a mistake. No matter how many years they have believed in God for, do those who are promoted really possess the truth reality? Not necessarily. Are they able to implement the work arrangements of the house of God? Not necessarily. Do they have a sense of responsibility? Are they loyal? Are they able to submit? When they encounter an issue, are they able to seek the truth? All of this is unknown. Do these people have God-fearing hearts? And just how great are their God-fearing hearts? Are they able to avoid following their own will when they do things? Are they able to seek God? During the time that they perform the work of leaders, are they**

able to frequently come before God to seek the intentions of God? Are they able to lead people into the truth reality? They are certainly incapable of such things. They haven't received training and they haven't had enough experiences, so they are incapable of these things. This is why promoting and cultivating someone doesn't mean they already understand the truth, nor is it saying that they are already capable of doing their duty in a way that is up to standard. ... What is the point of Me saying this? It is to let everyone know that they must correctly approach the various types of talented people promoted and cultivated in God's house, that they must not be harsh in their demands of these people, and, of course, that they must not be unrealistic in their opinion of them either. It is foolish to excessively admire and look up to them; it is inhumane and unrealistic to make overly harsh demands of them. So what is the most reasonable way to treat them? To regard them as ordinary people and, when you need to seek someone out regarding a problem, to fellowship with them and learn from each other's strengths and complement each other" (The Word, Vol. 5. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers (5)). God's words are very clear. Being selected as a leader or worker doesn't mean that person knows the truth and can do their duty adequately. They have corrupt dispositions, too. They may perform their duty according to their own whims and experiences, and may do things which violate the principles. We have to discern people according to the truth principles, not blindly follow anyone. On top of that, even if leaders' fellowship on the truth is illuminating, it is enlightenment and guidance from the Holy Spirit and we should accept it from God. We shouldn't blindly adore and follow the leaders. If there are errors or oversights in a leader's or worker's work, or if they violate any truth principles, it should be handled properly. Pointers and

help can be offered with love so they can change and do things according to principle. But since I adored status and power, I fallaciously thought that since Li Juan had been an upper leader, she had to know the truth better than us. My thinking was so distorted! Although She'd been a leader for years and had some work experience, and she could speak of some doctrines and resolve some issues, that didn't mean she understood the truth. Her fellowship and understanding usually sounded great, and she said when we didn't understand things, we should seek the truth principles, not cling to our own views. But in the face of problems, she always went her own way. She wouldn't remotely accept others' suggestions and she didn't have a seeking heart. She just talked about doctrine without any realities. She didn't have any reflection or understanding of her arrogant, satanic nature, and was ready to casually expel people in order to maintain her own status. Looking at Li Juan in light of all this, it was clear that she was of the same kind as false leaders and antichrists.

Zhang Ping and her family were reinstated to the church after that. Thinking of how they hadn't been able to live a life of the church for over two months and all the spiritual pain they must have suffered, I felt awful in a way I can't describe. I hated myself for not seeking the truth, and just listening to a person. If I'd sought the truth principles and taken them back into the church right away, their life entry wouldn't have been so delayed. At that point I realized that blindly adoring someone makes it too easy to do evil and resist God along with them. I also hated how muddled and blind I was, that I followed someone in doing such great evil. Later on, I read this in God's words: **"The simplest way to describe faith in God is trusting there is a God, and, on this foundation, following Him, submitting to Him, accepting His sovereignty, orchestrations, and arrangements, heeding His words, living in accordance with His words, doing**



**everything according to His words, being a true created being, and fearing Him and shunning evil; only this is true faith in God. This is what it means to follow God”** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. One Cannot Be Saved by Believing in Religion or Engaging in Religious Ceremony). God’s words showed me that fearing God, honoring Him as great, and seeking the truth principles when problems occur are the least that we should uphold in our belief in God. No matter who it is, as long as what they say is in line with the truth principles, you should follow it, and staunchly reject anything stemming from human notions and imaginings. Everything should be done according to God’s words. That is true faith, and truly following God. Thank God! I felt clear on my future path of following God.

One day when I was discussing training people with the church leader, Sister Mingyi, she mentioned that Sister Zhao Xunzhen was able to know herself when things came up, and her fellowship on the truth was practical, so she could be cultivated as a supervisor of watering work. But in my interactions with Xunzhen, I found she lacked caliber and didn’t have a pure understanding of the truth. She was really passive in her duty and hadn’t gotten good results for several months in a row. She wasn’t a good candidate. But since Mingyi recommended her, I wondered if I wasn’t seeing things correctly. Mingyi had been a church leader for years, so her discernment should surpass mine. I figured I should just go with what she said. But I felt guilty when I thought about it that way. I realized I was focusing on Mingyi’s status and the years she’d served as a leader. Wasn’t I adulating status and power, and following a person again? I thought about the matter of Zhang Ping and her family. The consequences of me adoring power and not upholding principles were distressing for me. Behind my encountering this sort of thing again, there was God’s intention. If I still couldn’t uphold principles, and helped promote an unsuitable candidate as

supervisor, that would hold up the brothers' and sisters' life entry. Mingyi was a leader, but that didn't mean she knew the truth or understood people perfectly. Her suggestion was just something for me to consider. I had to consider whether Xunzhen should be cultivated based on the principles. Later, I gathered some assessments of Xunzhen, which confirmed she lacked caliber and didn't do actual work, so she wasn't a good candidate. I shared my opinion with Mingyi and she expressed agreement. I felt in my heart that the only way to be at peace is to not blindly follow anyone, but to practice in accordance with the truth principles.

The incident with Zhang Ping and her family has been etched into my heart. This unforgettable lesson let me see the consequences of adulating and following a person while having faith. I also experienced that seeking the truth and doing things according to the truth is the only way to follow God and gain His approval.

## 15. Adulterations in My Sacrifices for God

By Jiang Ping, China

One day in April 2020, I suddenly felt this terrible back pain on the right side. I thought I'd sprained it by accident, so I didn't think too much of it, figuring I could put a medicinal patch on and it would be fine. But to my surprise, my back pain just got worse. It was like being stabbed with a needle—it was a piercing pain all the way from my chest through to my back. When it got bad, it felt like something clawing at my flesh and bones. The pain was so intense, I really can't describe it. For several nights it even hurt too much to sleep. I felt like I couldn't take it anymore and wanted to rush to see a doctor, but I'd just set up a meeting to share the gospel with some people. Going for a checkup would definitely delay that. I figured I'd go in a few days, after meeting with them, and besides, it was all in God's hands. I just needed to keep doing my duty, and I might feel better after a few days. So I steeled myself to the pain, and went to the hospital after spreading the gospel. The doctor said to me very gravely, "Why'd you wait until now to come in? This is no small matter. This is shingles caused by a virus, if it becomes serious it could even be fatal." I was really taken aback. I'd never imagined it was something so serious, that it could even cost me my life if it weren't treated! I'd been actively sharing the gospel and doing my duty, so how could I have gotten such a serious illness? Over these last few years I'd made sacrifices and expended myself, and I'd suffered and paid a price. I had never betrayed God, even when I was arrested and brutally tortured by the Communist Party, and I'd kept on doing my duty after prison. So how could I still have gotten ill? I got more upset as I thought about it. I felt like I was about to cry, and I felt an emptiness in my heart.

At that time things were pretty busy at the church, so I kept doing my duty while receiving treatment. When I was out on my bicycle, any bump would put me in agonizing pain. Sometimes I'd be hit with a sudden bout of pain and couldn't even sit still. I'd lie down when I got home from my duty, without a drop of strength and not wanting to talk at all. I knew that this was happening to me with God's permission. I was praying and seeking, and reflecting on whether something I might have been doing wasn't in line with God's intention, and I thought that as long as I saw my mistake and kept doing my duty, I might recover from my illness. But two months went by in no time, and I wasn't doing any better. I worried about how long this illness had been going on—what would I do if it never got better? Over these last few years I'd never stopped doing my duty. I kept sharing the gospel even when I was sick, so why wasn't I getting better? I felt more wronged and more upset as I thought about it. I thought, "If I never recover, the day might come when I can't even do a duty anymore and I won't be able to prepare good deeds. Will I be able to be saved then? Was everything I'd given over the years in vain? I should save my energy for my health and see how things go with my illness." I didn't put my heart into my duty as much after that. In our group gatherings, I'd just perfunctorily ask about potential gospel targets, and if there weren't any, I'd go home and get some rest. I was really afraid of wearing myself out and getting sicker. During that time, I was totally preoccupied with my illness, and I was really depressed. I wasn't gaining any enlightenment from God's words, and my fellowship in gatherings was really dry. I felt really distant from God. In my pain, I prayed to God, "Oh God! I feel miserable because of this illness, I have complaints, and I don't have any drive to do my duty. Please enlighten me to understand Your intentions. I want to submit, reflect on myself, and learn a lesson."

I read God's words in my seeking: "First, when people begin to believe in God, which of them does not have their own aims, motivations, and ambitions? Even though one part of them believes in the existence of God and has seen the existence of God, their belief in God still contains those motivations, and their ultimate aim in believing in God is to receive His blessings and the things they want. In people's life experiences, they often think to themselves: 'I've given up my family and career for God, and what has He given me? I must add it up, and confirm it—have I received any blessings recently? I've given a lot during this time, I've run and run, and have suffered much—has God given me any promises in return? Has He remembered my good deeds? What will my end be? Can I receive God's blessings? ...' Every person constantly makes such calculations within their heart, and they make demands of God which bear their motivations, ambitions, and a transactional mentality. This is to say, in his heart man is constantly testing God, constantly devising plans about God, constantly arguing the case for his own individual end with God, and trying to extract a statement from God, seeing whether or not God can give him what he wants. At the same time as pursuing God, man does not treat God as God. Man has always tried to make deals with God, ceaselessly making demands of Him, and even pressing Him at every step, trying to take a mile after being given an inch. At the same time as trying to make deals with God, man also argues with Him, and there are even people who, when trials befall them or they find themselves in certain situations, often become weak, negative and slack in their work, and full of complaints about God. From the time when man first began to believe in God, he has considered God to be a cornucopia, a Swiss Army knife, and he has considered himself to be God's greatest creditor, as if trying

**to get blessings and promises from God were his inherent right and obligation, while God's responsibility were to protect and care for man, and to provide for him. Such is the basic understanding of 'belief in God' of all those who believe in God, and such is their deepest understanding of the concept of belief in God"** (The Word, Vol. 2. On Knowing God. God's Work, God's Disposition, and God Himself II). I felt really guilty when I pondered God's words. I saw that I simply wasn't treating God like God in my faith. I'd been treating God like a Swiss Army knife, like a cornucopia, thinking that as long as I kept expending myself for God, He was sure to keep me safe and sound, that I'd never face illness or tragedy, and that I'd get to escape disasters of all kinds, and end up being saved and gaining a good destination. Over these last few years I'd gone away from my family and left my career behind to do my duty, I had suffered and given a lot, and I never pulled back even when I was arrested and tortured. But when I became sick, especially when I saw that my health problems were dragging on, I blamed God and tried to reason with Him. I was tallying up all my suffering over the years, and thought that everything I'd given would be a waste if I wasn't going to be saved, and I started slacking off in my duty. I saw that my faith wasn't to gain the truth and submit to God, but to exchange my suffering and hard work for God's grace and blessings. Wasn't that just cheating and using God? In order to save mankind, God has given us so many words to water and sustain us. But I didn't repay God's love; instead, I tried to make transactions with Him. When He didn't fulfill what I wanted, I started muddling through my duty, and not caring. I wasn't being genuine toward God at all. I really didn't have any conscience or reason! I came before God and prayed, "God, I've been using You and cheating You in my faith. I'm barely even human! I want to repent to You. Please guide me."

Afterward I read the word of God: **“In many cases, the trials of God are burdens He gives to people. However great the burden bestowed upon you by God, that is the weight of burden you should undertake, for God understands you, and knows you will be able to bear it. The burden given to you by God will not exceed your stature or the limits of your endurance, so there is no question that you will be able to bear it. No matter what manner of burden God gives you, what kind of trial, remember one thing: Whether or not you understand God’s intentions and whether or not you are enlightened and illuminated by the Holy Spirit after you pray, whether or not this trial is God disciplining you or warning you, it does not matter if you do not understand. As long as you do not delay in performing your duty and can loyally hold fast to your duty, God will be satisfied, and you will stand firm in your testimony. ... If, in your faith in God and pursuit of the truth, you are able to say, ‘Whatever sickness or disagreeable event God allows to befall me—no matter what God does—I must submit, and stay in my place as a created being. Before all else, I must put this aspect of the truth—submission—into practice, I must implement it, and live out the reality of submission to God. Moreover, I must not cast aside what God has commissioned to me and the duty I should perform. Even on my last breath, I must hold fast to my duty,’ is this not bearing testimony? When you have this kind of resolve and this kind of state, are you still able to complain about God? No, you are not. At such a time, you will think to yourself, ‘God gives me this breath, He has provided for and protected me all these years, He has taken much pain from me, given me much grace, and many truths. I have understood truths and mysteries that people have not understood for generations. I have gained so much from God, so I must repay God! Before, my stature was**

**too small, I understood nothing, and everything I did was hurtful to God. I may not have another chance to repay God in the future. No matter how much time I have left to live, I must offer the little strength I have and do what I can for God, so that God can see that all these years of providing for me have not been in vain, but have borne fruit. Let me bring comfort to God, and no longer hurt or disappoint Him”**”

(The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Only in the Frequent Reading of God’s Words and Contemplation of the Truth Is There a Way Ahead). Pondering God’s words, I was able to understand His intention. No matter what kind of hardships I encounter, it’s all permitted by God. This illness was God giving me a load to bear that I should accept and submit to, and I should stand witness. I thought of Peter, who sought to satisfy and submit to God. He suffered through illness and lived with deprivation, but he was always able to accept these things and never complained. These things never changed his love for God. I needed to stand in the place of a created being like Peter, and really learn a lesson from this situation. I kept on taking medication while also doing my duty, and I didn’t feel as constrained by my illness. After a few months of gradual recovery, my condition disappeared. I was so grateful to God!

One day in September, I came home from sharing the gospel, and my husband told me in a heavy tone that he’d gone in for a regular checkup the day before, and the doctor told him to come back the next day for an MRI. Hearing my husband say this was really unsettling for me, and I wondered if he had something serious. I was tossing and turning that night and couldn’t get any sleep. I tried consoling myself, thinking it probably wasn’t a big deal. He was also a believer, and I’d been doing a duty away from home, so God should protect him. I went to the hospital with him the next day. Shockingly, it turned out that he had pancreatic cancer. I was



absolutely stunned when I heard the news. I'd heard that this kind of cancer was really hard to treat and that if it was not treated in time it could progress very quickly, and also that if it was serious, it could be fatal within a matter of months. I thought of how he seemed full of life, but that he might not have much time left. I felt like the sky was coming crashing down. I thought, "I've just barely recovered and now my husband has cancer. Why is this happening?" Whenever I thought about my husband's cancer, I would just cry and cry. I prayed to God in my pain, asking Him to watch over my heart, and guide me to understand His intention.

I read in God's words: **"In their belief in God, what people seek is to obtain blessings for the future; this is their goal in their faith. All people have this intent and hope, but the corruption in their nature must be resolved through trials and refinement. In whichever aspects you are not purified and reveal corruption, these are the aspects in which you must be refined—this is God's arrangement. God creates an environment for you, forcing you to be refined there so that you can know your own corruption. Ultimately, you reach a point at which you would rather die in order to give up your schemes and desires and to submit to God's sovereignty and arrangement. Therefore, if people do not have several years of refinement, if they do not endure a certain amount of suffering, they will not be able to rid themselves of the constraints of corruption of the flesh in their thoughts and in their hearts. In whichever aspects people are still subject to the constraints of their satanic nature, and in whichever aspects they still have their own desires and their own demands, these are the aspects in which they should suffer. Only through suffering can lessons be learned, which means being able to gain truth, and understand God's intentions. In fact, many truths are understood by experiencing painful trials.**

**Nobody can understand God's intentions, recognize God's almightiness and wisdom, or appreciate God's righteous disposition when in a comfortable and easy environment or when circumstances are favorable. That would be impossible!"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Part Three). I reflected on myself in light of God's words. When I was sick before, through the judgment and revelation of God's words, I'd recognized my wrong perspective of pursuing blessings, and I was ready to submit whether I got better or not. I thought I'd let go of my drive to pursue blessings, but when my husband got cancer, I couldn't help but blame and misunderstand God. I felt like God should protect us, since we're believers. I saw how deeply entrenched my desire for blessings was. If God hadn't revealed me that way, I would have had difficulty in recognizing the intention to gain blessings and extravagant desires rooted deep in my heart, and it would have been even harder for me to be purified and achieve transformation. Then I realized that there was a lesson I needed to learn from my husband's illness, and I had to stop blaming God.

Calming down, I reflected on why I just couldn't help but complain and misunderstand God when my husband got cancer. I read in the word of God: **"In the eyes of antichrists, and in their thoughts and views, there must be some benefits in following God; they will not bother to move without benefits. If there is no fame, gain, or status that can be enjoyed, if none of the work they do or the duties they perform earn them the admiration of others, then there is no point in believing in God and doing their duties. The first benefits they must gain are the promises and blessings spoken of in the words of God, and they must also enjoy fame, gain, and status within the church. Antichrists think that in believing in God, one must be superior to others, one must be admired, one must be special—at the very least, believers in God must enjoy**

these things. If they do not, there is some question over whether this God they're believing in is the true God. Is antichrists' logic not that they take the words 'Those who believe in god must enjoy the blessings and grace of god' as the truth? Have a go at analyzing these words: Are they the truth? (They aren't.) Now it is clear that these words are not the truth, they are a fallacy, they are the logic of Satan, and they bear no relation to the truth. Has God ever said, 'If people believe in Me, they will surely be blessed, and will never suffer adversity'? Which line of God's words talks about this? God has never said words like that or done this. When it comes to blessings and adversities, there is a truth to be sought. What is the wise saying that people should adhere to? Job said, 'Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive adversity?' (Job 2:10). Are these words the truth? These are the words of a man; they cannot be elevated to the heights of the truth, though they do conform to the truth in some way. In what way do they conform to the truth? Whether people are blessed or suffer adversity is all in the hands of God, it is all under the sovereignty of God. This is the truth. Do antichrists believe this? No, they don't. They don't acknowledge this. Why do they not believe or acknowledge this? (Their belief in God is in order to be blessed—they only want to be blessed.) (Because they are too selfish, and only pursue the interests of the flesh.) In their belief, antichrists only wish to be blessed, and they do not want to suffer adversity. When they see someone who is blessed, who has benefited, who has been graced, and who has received more material enjoyments, great advantages, they believe that this is done by God; and if they do not receive such material blessings, then this is not the action of God. The implication is, 'If you really are god, then you can only bless people; you should avert people's adversity and not allow

them to meet with suffering. Only then is there a value and a point to people believing in you. If, after following you, people are still beset by adversity, if they still suffer, then what is the point of believing in you?’ They do not admit that all things and events are in the hands of God, that God holds sovereignty over all. And why don’t they admit this? Because antichrists are afraid of suffering adversity. They want only to benefit, to take advantage, to enjoy blessings; they wish not to accept God’s sovereignty or orchestration, but only to receive benefits from God. This is the selfish and despicable point of view of antichrists” (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Ten: They Despise the Truth, Brazenly Flout Principles, and Ignore the Arrangements of God’s House (Part Six)). **“All corrupt humans live for themselves. Every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost—this is the summation of human nature. People believe in God for their own sake; when they forsake things and expend themselves for God, it is in order to be blessed, and when they are loyal to Him, it is in order to be rewarded. In sum, it is all done for the purpose of being blessed, rewarded, and entering the kingdom of heaven. In society, people work for their own benefit, and in the house of God, they perform a duty in order to be blessed. It is for the sake of gaining blessings that people forsake everything and can withstand much suffering: There is no better evidence of man’s satanic nature”** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Part Three). God’s words reveal antichrists’ perspective on blessings and misfortune. They’re going after blessings in their faith, and think that they should be blessed because of their faith. If that doesn’t happen, they think having faith is meaningless, and they may even betray God and leave Him at any moment. I saw that I had the same outlook on faith. I thought that since I’d made all those sacrifices, God should bless me and my family with safety, free from illness and calamity. So whether it was

my husband or myself getting sick, I misunderstood and blamed God. I even made unreasonable demands of Him, wanting Him to heal my virus and my husband's cancer. As soon as God didn't satisfy my desires, I no longer wanted to expend myself for my duty. My perspective on faith had been so absurd! The truth is that God's never said that bad things won't happen to believers. He rules over everything. Birth, death, sickness and health are all in His hands, people not only receive blessings from God, but also misfortune, and believers are no exception. Doing a duty is the most proper and natural thing a created being should do and has nothing to do with being blessed or not. But I was so deeply corrupted by Satan that things like "Every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost" and "Never lift a finger without a reward" were satanic poisons that I lived by. I was just constantly thinking of my own interests, seeing God as something for me to use. I wanted to use my suffering, sacrifices, and hard work to cheat God out of blessings. When God did something that compromised my personal interests, I was full of complaints and misunderstanding toward Him, and even reasoned with Him and opposed Him. What kind of believer was I? I was so selfish and despicable! I thought of Paul, he suffered a lot for the Lord, too, but he didn't pursue the truth or knowledge of God at all. He used his sacrifices, contributions, and hard work just to exchange these things for rewards and a crown. He said, "I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: From now on there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness" (2 Timothy 4:7-8). What he really meant by that was that if God didn't crown and reward him, then God wasn't righteous. He wanted to use his own efforts and suffering as capital to pressure God, to resist God. God eventually punished him. I felt really scared when I realized this. I saw I hadn't been focused on pursuing the truth in my faith, but just on pursuing grace and blessings. I was on a path against God. I'd

never gain the truth that way, and my corrupt disposition wouldn't change. I'd just end up being eliminated! There was another passage of God's word that I read later: **"You may think that believing in God is about suffering, or doing all manner of things for Him; you might think that the purpose of believing in God is so that your flesh may be at peace, or so that everything in your life runs smoothly, or so that you may be comfortable and at ease in all things. However, none of these are purposes that people should attach to their belief in God. If you believe for these purposes, then your perspective is incorrect, and it is simply impossible for you to be perfected. God's actions, God's righteous disposition, His wisdom, His words, and His wondrousness and unfathomableness are all things people ought to understand. Having this understanding, you should use it to rid your heart of all personal demands, hopes, and notions. Only by eliminating these things can you meet the conditions demanded by God, and it is only by doing this that you can have life and satisfy God. The purpose of believing in God is to satisfy Him and to live out the disposition He requires, so that His actions and glory may be manifested through this group of unworthy people. This is the correct perspective for believing in God, and this is also the goal that you should seek"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Those Who Are to Be Made Perfect Must Undergo Refinement). God's words showed me what I should be pursuing. I shouldn't be going after blessings or any kind of benefit in my faith, rather, I should be seeking to know and satisfy God, to be like Job without any requests or demands of God. Job believed that everything he had was given by God, so whether God gave or took away, whether he had blessings or misfortune, he submitted to God unconditionally and praised His righteousness. So when Satan tempted Job, when all his possessions had been stolen, his children had died, and he had

broken out in boils all over, he never complained about God, and kept praising His name. No matter what God did, Job stood in the place of a created being, submitted to God and worshiped Him. Job's faith was praised by God. This understanding gave me a path of practice. Whether my husband got better or not, I had to submit to God and fulfill my duty.

I read this in God's words later: **"God has already fully planned the genesis, advent, lifespan, outcome of all the created beings, as well as their life's mission and the role they play in all mankind. No one can change these things; this is the authority of the Creator. The advent of every created being, their life's mission, when their lifespan will end—all of these laws have been ordained by God long ago, just as God ordained the orbit of every celestial body; which orbit these celestial bodies follow, for how many years, how they orbit, what laws they follow—this was all ordained by God long ago, unchanged for thousands, tens of thousands, hundreds of thousands, of years. This is ordained by God, and this is His authority"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Part Three). I saw from God's words that our destiny, lifespan, and outcome are all in the hands of the Lord of Creation. Our birth, death, sickness, and health are all ordained by God's rule. God ordains when we die, and none of us can escape that. But if the time that God decided for us has not yet come, even if we do get cancer, we still won't die. This is God's authority, and no one can change that. Understanding that helped me relax a bit. I knew my husband's health was in God's hands, and all I could do was submit to what God arranged and fulfill my own duty.

My husband went on to get chemotherapy for a while at the hospital, and surprisingly, those cancer cells in his blood were gone. All indicators were normal. Half the tumor was gone, too. The doctor said it was very rare

to see a case like his. Our son said that his colleague's dad had gotten the same cancer. He got chemo once and couldn't take it, then died after a few months. I was so grateful to God when my husband got better so quickly. What made me happiest was that my husband had always been a believer in name only, and had always gone after money, but after his cancer, he gained some understanding of God's almighty sovereignty, and then he spread the gospel and testified God's deeds among friends and relatives.

Though going through this was painful for me, I gained some understanding about my desire for blessings and my incorrect views on pursuit, and I corrected the goals of my pursuit in faith. These are all lessons that I learned through this experience. I saw that God's work of saving mankind is so practical!



## **16. Seeing Religious Pastors Exposed as Evil Servants**

By Tim, Myanmar

In September 2020, I met a sister online. She testified that the Lord Jesus has returned as Almighty God, and that He is expressing truths to do the work of judgment beginning with God's house. I was thrilled to hear of the Lord's return and started attending online gatherings and investigating Almighty God's work in the last days. By reading Almighty God's words, I learned many truths that I had never heard before, like the reality of Satan's corruption of man, the three stages of work that God performs to save mankind, the mysteries of the incarnation, and how God does the work of judgment in the last days. Through a period of seeking and investigating, I became sure that Almighty God is the Lord Jesus returned, and joined The Church of Almighty God. I enjoyed the watering and sustenance of God's words every day, and my spirit felt joy that it never had before. By comparison, the sermons given by the pastors in our local church were all about the same old things, dry and boring, and lacking in illumination. They weren't edifying at all, so I stopped attending church services.

Then in February 2021, there was a military coup in Myanmar, and the internet was cut off, so I couldn't attend online gatherings with my brothers and sisters anymore. Before long, two brothers came to my village to organize local gatherings, which over 20 people attended. To our surprise, after just a few gatherings, someone reported us to the local pastors. The pastors started telling people in the church that we were going to online gatherings instead of attending church services, and that we wouldn't listen to them or the elders. They spread a rumor that we were setting up our own religious faction, and they told all of the churchgoers to reject us. Pretty

much everyone in our village was Christian, and they all adored the pastors and listened to them. Because of the pastors' attacks and judgment, news of our belief in Almighty God spread quickly through the village, and everyone, including our relatives, friends, and neighbors, started scolding us, saying, "It's atrocious that you're not going to church or listening to the pastors!" Everywhere I went, the villagers were wagging their fingers at me. I was really distraught. I had always had a great relationship with my friends and neighbors, and we'd always helped each other out, but they had begun treating me like a thorn in their side, like an enemy. Faith is a personal freedom. We were just practicing our faith, gathering, and reading God's words, so why were the pastors judging and condemning us and telling the villagers to reject us? Before I knew it, I had sunk into negativity. I came before God in prayer, "God, the pastors are lashing out at us and even our friends and relatives are against us. I'm really miserable. God, I don't understand why they are treating us this way. Please enlighten me to better understand this so I can stop living in negativity." Then I thought of a passage of God's words. Almighty God says: **"When God works, cares for a person, and looks upon this person, and when He favors and approves this person, Satan trails closely behind, trying to mislead the person and bring them to harm. If God wishes to gain this person, Satan will do everything in its power to obstruct God, using various wicked ploys to tempt, disturb and impair the work of God, in order to achieve its hidden objective. What is this objective? It does not want God to gain anyone; it wants to snatch possession of those whom God wishes to gain, it wants to control them, to take charge of them so they worship it, so they join it in committing evil acts, and resist God. Is this not Satan's sinister motive? ... In warring with God, and trailing along behind Him, Satan's objective is to demolish all the work God wants to**

**do, to occupy and control those whom God wants to gain, to completely extinguish those whom God wants to gain. If they are not extinguished, then they come to Satan's possession, to be used by it—this is its objective”** (The Word, Vol. 2. On Knowing God. God Himself, the Unique IV). Through God's words, I understood that God is expressing truths to judge and cleanse people in the last days so that He can save and gain a group of true believers. But Satan is God's enemy, and it uses all sorts of tactics to obstruct and undermine God's work so that people will leave God, betray Him, and live under Satan's power. That way it can occupy and control them, and ultimately, they'll be punished in hell along with it. I thought about the behavior of the pastors and elders. They heard the news of the Lord's return, but they didn't investigate it at all, and they even kept others from doing so. Their sermons weren't spiritually nourishing, and they wouldn't let people seek the true way. When they saw that we had stopped going to church and following them, they condemned and slandered us, hoping to force us to betray Almighty God, so that we'd return to their church, keep obeying them, remain under their control, and ultimately lose God's salvation of the last days. Were they not the minions of Satan? Realizing this, I told myself that I mustn't fall for Satan's tricks. I couldn't give up on Almighty God and follow the pastors, I had to keep standing strong.

After that, some of the new believers in our village and those who had just begun investigating God's work in the last days weakened and pulled away. The rest of us didn't stop holding gatherings, even though people around us were still protesting about it. The pastors were incensed when they found out about this and they got some church co-workers to keep coming to my home, telling me to go to one of the pastors' houses for a meeting. I was angry about that: “Gathering, listening to God's words, and

fellowshipping on the truth are my personal freedoms. Why do the pastors keep trying to stand in my way? I'm going to go hear them out, and see what exactly I've done wrong." So, one evening, I went to the pastor's house along with several other brothers and sisters. Some other pastors and elders were there too. One of the pastors said, "I've heard that you've been listening to sermons online. As your pastors, it's our responsibility to remind you that you mustn't accept any sermons besides those of the Lord!" I responded, "But we are listening to the Lord's sermons. The Lord Jesus has returned and He is performing a new stage of His work." Before I could finish, the pastor interrupted me angrily, "That's enough! We're not going to listen to another word of this. You have to make a choice today. Are you going to keep believing in another God, or are you going to listen to us and come back to our church?" As he spoke, he got out a notebook that had our names written in it. He said sternly, "If you're going to keep listening to those sermons online, put a cross by your name, otherwise put a check. You'll be in a lot of trouble if you don't listen to us! We won't do anything for your families' marriages, funerals, births, or home-building, and we won't help with any of the arrangements." We were all silent. I hesitated a bit—if I didn't write anything, the pastors would still find ways to obstruct my faith. If I chose to keep believing in Almighty God, the pastors and elders wouldn't help my family with any arrangements in the future. These were old customs that had been passed down in our village, and these traditional ceremonies were really important to everyone—we all had to adhere to them. Plus, everyone in the village listened to the pastors and elders. If the pastors didn't show up, no one else would either, and they certainly wouldn't help out. Did that mean that everyone would reject me? But I knew that the Lord had returned, so if I chose to return to religion, wouldn't I be denying and betraying God? For a moment, I didn't know

what to do, so I prayed for God's guidance. Then I remembered something that the Lord Jesus said: **"No man, having put his hand to the plough, and looking back, is fit for the kingdom of God"** (Luke 9:62). It's true. I'm a believer in God. As believers, we need to honor God as great, submit to His work, and keep pace with His footsteps. How could I call myself a believer if I let myself be constrained by the pastors and didn't dare follow God? How could I be qualified to enter God's kingdom? After this occurred to me, I prayed, "Oh God, I want to stand firm in my witness for You today. No matter what happens to me in the future, I want to follow You." I felt a lot calmer then and resolutely put a cross by my name. The others put crosses by their names too, one after the other, and only one sister put a check. The pastor said angrily, "This is your choice—from now on we're on different paths. Whatever happens to you is none of our concern."

After I got home, my worries resurfaced. Whenever anything happened to the families in our village, we'd ask the pastors to pray for us, to preside over it, and to perform the religious rites. If the pastors really turned their backs on us after this, it would be impossible to do any of those things, and everyone would spurn and attack me. I didn't know what other tactics they'd employ to keep us from practicing our faith, or when this would all come to an end. Thinking about all that was really painful for me and I didn't know how to get through it. I immediately said a prayer, "God, I can see how meager my stature really is. I'm always worried about being slandered and rejected by everyone. I'm afraid to face these things and I'm feeling weak. Please guide me through this situation." After that, I found a way to get online, and sought out the sister who was watering me to tell her about my difficulties. She sent me a passage of Almighty God's words: **"After receiving testimony from Job following the end of his trials, God resolved that He would gain a group—or more than a group—of people**

like Job, yet He resolved to never again allow Satan to attack or abuse any other person using the means by which it had tempted, attacked, and abused Job, by betting with God; God did not permit Satan to ever again do such things to man, who is weak, foolish, and ignorant—it was enough that Satan had tempted Job! Not permitting Satan to abuse people howsoever it wishes is the mercy of God. For God, it was enough that Job had suffered the temptation and abuse of Satan. God did not permit Satan to ever again do such things, for the lives and everything of people who follow God are ruled and orchestrated by God, and Satan is not entitled to manipulate God's chosen ones at will—you should be clear about this point! God cares about man's weakness, and understands his foolishness and ignorance. Although, in order that man could be completely saved, God has to hand him over to Satan, God is not willing to see man ever played for a fool and abused by Satan, and He does not want to see man always suffering. Man was created by God, and that God rules and arranges everything about man is perfectly natural and justified; this is the responsibility of God, and it is the authority by which God rules all things! God does not permit Satan to abuse and mistreat man at will, He does not permit Satan to employ various means to lead man astray, and, moreover, He does not permit Satan to intervene in God's sovereignty of man, nor does He allow Satan to trample and destroy the laws by which God rules all things, to say nothing of God's great work of managing and saving mankind! Those whom God wishes to save, and those who are able to bear testimony to God, are the core and the crystallization of the work of God's six-thousand-year management plan, as well as the price of His efforts in His six thousand years of work. How could God casually give these people to Satan?" (The Word, Vol. 2. On Knowing God. God's Work, God's

Disposition, and God Himself II). From God's words, I learned that whatever we face each day is permitted by God, and that everything is in His hands. No matter how savage Satan is or how much it wants to hurt us, it can't do anything without God's permission. God was allowing me to be disrupted and obstructed in order to test me. He was hoping that I would be like Job, and stand firm in my witness for Him through this situation. God wanted me to lean on Him and experience His work and words, so that I could develop true faith in Him. But I was caught in Satan's net. I wanted to protect my relationships with other people and I didn't want to be rejected and slandered. I was afraid of bad things happening to me, and I hadn't understood God's intention. I calmed down and prayed, "Oh God, now I understand that You're allowing all of this to happen. I'm ready to stand firm in my witness for You. But my stature is still so small, please strengthen my faith so that I can get through this."

Because of the attacks and judgment of the pastors, the other villagers kept trying to obstruct us from believing in Almighty God. They made fun of us, slandered us, and yelled at us right in front of our families, saying that we were undermining the village customs by not engaging in the religious rites. They said that if we kept our faith, they'd report us to the government and have us arrested. My family couldn't bear the stress. They argued with me every day, urging me to give up my faith. The other brothers and sisters were coerced by their families too. Some were kicked out and not even allowed into their own homes. The pastors spread lies, saying that we were only having so many problems at home because we wouldn't listen to them or go to church. They also said that they wanted to interrogate the two brothers who had come to water us. I was beside myself with anger when I heard this. The pastors were really turning the truth on its head. If it hadn't been for their attacks, we never would have been rejected

by so many people. During that time, my brothers and sisters all felt negative and weak, and they lacked the motivation to gather or do their duties. I also felt weak when I saw all this happening. I didn't know how to help and support my brothers and sisters, and I suddenly felt that walking the path of faith was too difficult. I couldn't understand it. We were just believing in God, gathering, and reading God's words. Why wouldn't they leave us be? Why were they determined to force us onto a dead-end path? In my pain, I called out to God, "God, I've been feeling so weak and I can't quiet my heart. How can I stay on the path of faith? Please enlighten and guide me." After that, I thought of something the Lord Jesus said: **"If the world hates you, you know that it hated Me before it hated you. If you were of the world, the world would love his own: but because you are not of the world, but I have chosen you out of the world, therefore the world hates you"** (John 15:18–19). It suddenly dawned on me that the reason these people hated and persecuted us so much was because they actually hated God's coming, and they were resisting God. In the last days, God expresses the truth to do the work of judgment, which reveals all people. There are some people who say that they believe in God, but they do not love the truth—in fact, they hate it. So, now that God has become flesh and come to earth to speak, work, and express the truth, they judge and condemn Him. It's just like when the Lord Jesus came to work—the Jewish leaders refused to accept the truths He expressed, and they did their utmost to condemn and blaspheme Him. Jewish believers went along rejecting the Lord with them, and in the end they had Him nailed to the cross. The world is truly evil! But the more that the world rejects the way of Almighty God and the more that religious forces condemn and persecute it, the clearer it is that it is the true way, that it is God's work, and the more I want to keep following it and not give up!



Not long after that, some brothers and sisters learned what was happening in our village, and they sent me Almighty God's words. There was one passage that said: **"Do not be discouraged, do not be weak, and I will make things clear for you. The road to the kingdom is not so smooth; nothing is that simple! You want blessings to come to you easily, do you not? Today, everyone will have bitter trials to face. Without such trials, the loving heart you have for Me will not grow stronger and you will not have true love for Me. Even if these trials consist merely of minor circumstances, everyone must pass through them; it's just that the difficulty of the trials will vary from one person to another. Trials are a blessing from Me, and how many of you come often before Me and beg on your knees for My blessings? Silly children! You always think that a few auspicious words count as My blessing, yet you do not recognize that bitterness is one of My blessings. Those who share in My bitterness will certainly share in My sweetness. That is My promise and My blessing to you. Do not hesitate to eat and drink and enjoy My words. When the dark passes, light gathers. It is darkest before dawn; after this time the sky gradually brightens, and then the sun rises. Do not be afraid or timid"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Utterances of Christ in the Beginning, Chapter 41). I was so moved when I read this. We were following God's footsteps, so it was inevitable that we'd be hindered by the pastors and elders and treated unfairly by other villagers. This is because humanity has been so deeply corrupted by Satan, the world is so dark and evil, and none of them welcome God's coming. Following God isn't an easy thing to do. To enter God's kingdom and gain God's approval, we have to experience this kind of persecution and adversity. God is behind us, supporting us, so there was nothing for me to fear. I just had to pray and rely on God to experience this situation and believe that He would

guide us to overcome the pastors' obstruction and disruption. I thought of the experiences of our brothers and sisters in mainland China that I'd seen in movies and videos. They're persecuted, hounded, and monitored by the Chinese government, and they are at risk of arrest at any moment. Their families are also implicated by association, and they're stripped of their property and jobs. Many of the brothers and sisters are put in prison and brutally tortured. They suffer so much, but they're able to lean on God and give testimony to defeating Satan. Then I thought of how God has suffered during His two incarnations. The Lord Jesus was condemned and blasphemed by the Jewish church, and ultimately crucified in order to redeem mankind. In the last days, God has become flesh again, and He's expressing the truth to save mankind. He is resisted, condemned, rejected, and blasphemed by Satan's regime and the religious world's antichrist forces. God suffers so much to save mankind—my paltry suffering wasn't even worth mentioning. Although experiencing this situation was painful for me, I had some discernment of the clergy of the religious world and I gained more faith in God. God really does use difficult environments to impart people with the truth and perfect their faith. I felt so much calmer after understanding God's intention, and I came out from my cloud of negativity. I rushed to organize a gathering for all of my brothers and sisters who were still stuck in a state of negativity and weakness. Through fellowship, everyone was able to understand God's intention and find the faith to keep following Him, and they no longer felt negative. We started leading a normal church life, sharing the gospel, and bearing witness to God, and everyone felt motivated.

After that, the pastors and elders used every means to try and suppress us. Once, when a sister's husband died of an illness, her entire family kept pressuring her to go apologize to the pastors so that they would help with

prayers and funeral rites. The pastors and elders exploited this opportunity to try to coerce her to give up her faith in Almighty God and return to the church. I was so angry. She was grieving for her husband, and the pastors and elders were rubbing salt in the wound, pressuring her to give up her faith, just so she'd go back to the church and follow them. They were truly capable of such despicable things! Later, when the pastors, elders, and the town mayor saw that we were steadfastly refusing to return to the church, they incited the other villagers to shun us and isolate us, saying, "Since these people refuse to listen to us, just let them have their own faith. Keep an eye on your kids, keep them far away from these people. If anyone has contact with them or investigates their faith, their whole family will be implicated, and we won't help them with anything in the future." The pastors and elders even formed a youth group, composed of young people from the church, mainly to monitor us believers in Almighty God. If anyone came near us, that person would be called to one of the pastors' houses for questioning. This helped me see the true, God-resisting faces of the pastors and elders more clearly. They had the churchgoers under tight control, they were all in their clutches, and none were permitted to come before God and hear His voice. I thought of the Pharisees. Though the Lord Jesus' work and words were full of authority, the Pharisees wouldn't seek or investigate them. Fearing that believers would follow the Lord Jesus and the threat this would pose to their status and livelihoods, they kept condemning Him, and even had Him nailed to the cross. They kept believers in their clutches, only allowing people to worship them, and refusing to return God's sheep to Him. Were they not evil servants? Today's pastors and elders are no different from them! I remembered the Lord Jesus' words condemning them: **"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for you neither go in yourselves,**

**neither suffer you them that are entering to go in” (Matthew 23:13). “Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, you make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves” (Matthew 23:15).** These pastors are just like the Pharisees from the time of the Lord Jesus. They’re evil servants blocking people from entering the kingdom of heaven. It’s just like Almighty God exposes: **“There are those who read the Bible in grand churches and recite it all day long, yet not one among them understands the purpose of God’s work. Not one among them is able to know God; still less can any one among them accord with God’s intentions. They are all worthless, vile people, each standing on high to lecture God. They willfully oppose God even as they carry His banner. Claiming faith in God, still they eat the flesh and drink the blood of man. All such people are devils that devour the soul of man, head demons that deliberately disturb those trying to step onto the right path, and stumbling blocks impeding those who seek God. They may appear of ‘sound constitution,’ but how are their followers to know that they are none other than antichrists who lead people to stand against God? How are their followers to know that they are living devils dedicated to the devouring of human souls?”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. All People Who Do Not Know God Are People Who Oppose God).

The pastors and elders hadn’t investigated God’s work in the last days, and whenever they discovered that anyone else was investigating it, they found ways to obstruct them. They were afraid that believers would follow Almighty God and stop worshiping and following them, or giving them offerings, so they used old village customs and traditional rites to control people, trying to force them back to their church. They claimed to be believers, but they didn’t have a God-fearing heart at all. By nature, they

hated God and the truth. They were stumbling blocks and obstacles on our path to the kingdom of heaven. I understood that God had allowed all of this persecution to happen in order to help us gain discernment, so that we could truly cast off the control of the religious pastors. The pastors' and elders' attacks hadn't been able to keep me in a negative state, they had actually strengthened my faith in God. Their actions had allowed me to escape their control, and to continue sharing the gospel and bearing witness to God. With time, some of my friends and relatives began to gain discernment of the pastors through their behavior, and some of them accepted Almighty God's work in the last days when I bore witness to it. This showed me that God's wisdom is exercised based on Satan's tricks. The pastors' persecution and obstruction helped separate the sheep from the goats. Some people went along with the pastors in persecuting us, but others came to discern the pastors' essence through their behavior and returned before God. God's work is wondrous! I experienced how God's good will is behind everything that befalls us, and I also resolved that no matter what I faced in the future, I was ready to submit to God's arrangements and lean on Him in order to get through it. Thanks be to Almighty God!

## **17. What Is Hidden Behind Feelings of Inferiority?**

By Hai Lun, China

When I first began working as a leader, I was partnered with Sister Chen Xiao. When I saw that Chen Xiao had good caliber and was bold and resolute in her work, whereas I was inarticulate, had a subservient personality, and possessed an embarrassingly partial understanding of the skills needed for my work, I felt inferior and unqualified to be a leader. After observing how Chen Xiao adeptly fellowshiped and handled all manner of issues while I just sat aside awkwardly, I felt even more sure that I didn't have what it took and became increasingly despondent. I remained in that state for several months. Later on, I continued to serve as a church leader, but was given a new partner named Li Xue. When I saw how Li Xue was pretty, refined, capable and experienced, and gave the overall impression of a successful and professional girlboss, whereas I spoke without confidence, lacked any resolve, would often become anxious and withdrawn around people I didn't know or in situations with large groups of people, and lacked even the slightest semblance of a leader, I couldn't help but feel despondent. Each time Li Xue returned from a gathering, she would candidly discuss how she inquired with brothers and sisters about their current states and fellowshiped using God's words to resolve their issues and she would mention how much respect the brothers and sisters all had for her. When she spoke about these things, she was always radiant with delight. Despite noting that Li Xue seemed to be a bit self-aggrandizing, I felt that her occasional revelations of corruption were not a big problem given how she had good caliber and working ability, and was able to resolve issues. I was no match for her, I thought, I lacked her resoluteness.

After that, when I encountered issues, I would shrink and withdraw, thinking myself incapable, not daring to offer fellowship. Gradually, my state became worse and worse, and I felt even more convinced that I had poor caliber, lacked the truth reality, and was not cut out to be a leader. I wallowed in that despondent emotional state and just went through the motions in my duty. Because I continually failed to seek the truth and could not pull myself out of my negative slump, it was not long before I was dismissed. One year later, my brothers and sisters once again chose me to serve as a leader. I was partnered up with Sister Wu Fan and I soon noticed that she had good caliber and working ability, and mostly every time we worked together, she would take on a guiding role. One time in particular, when we co-hosted a gathering, Wu Fan did the majority of the fellowshipping and the brothers and sisters also enthusiastically chimed in with their own fellowship. As for me, I wanted to fellowship, but I worried that I wouldn't be able to fellowship effectively and so I ended up not saying anything to avoid embarrassment. I felt quite despondent after the gathering and thought that I still just wasn't cut out to be a leader. I wanted to just do some duty related to general affairs as a laborer and didn't want to be a leader anymore.

One day, I told my state to a few sisters, one sister reminded me that it would be quite dangerous for me if I didn't resolve my state promptly and that I really needed to spend some time in reflection. It was only then that I gained a bit of self-awareness: "Why am I so despondent? Why don't I have even the slightest bit of determination to strive to improve?" In the following days, I ceaselessly prayed to God, beseeching Him to guide me to understand my state and emerge from my despondency. Later on, I came across this passage of God's words: **"There are some people who, as children, were ordinary-looking, inarticulate, and not very quick-**

witted, causing others in their families and social environments to give rather unfavorable appraisals of them, saying things like: 'This kid is dull-witted, slow, and a clumsy speaker. Look at other people's children, who are so well-spoken that they can wrap people around their little finger. Whereas this kid just pouts all day long. He doesn't know what to say when meeting people, doesn't know how to explain or justify himself after doing something wrong, and can't amuse people. This kid is an idiot.' The parents say this, relatives and friends say this, and their teachers also say this. This environment exerts a certain, invisible pressure on such individuals. Through experiencing these environments, they unconsciously develop a certain kind of mindset. What kind of mindset? They think that they are not good-looking, not very likable, and that others are never happy to see them. They believe that they are not good at studying, are slow, and always feel embarrassed to open their mouths and speak in front of others. They are too embarrassed to say thank you when people give them something, thinking to themselves, 'Why am I always so tongue-tied? Why are other people such smooth talkers? I'm just stupid!' Subconsciously, they think they are worthless, but still are unwilling to acknowledge being that worthless, being that stupid. In their hearts they always ask themselves, 'Am I really that stupid? Am I really that unpleasant?' Their parents do not like them, and neither do their brothers and sisters, their teachers or their classmates. And occasionally their family members, their relatives and friends say of them, 'He is short, his eyes and nose are small, and with looks like that, he will not be successful when he grows up.' So, when they look in the mirror, they see that their eyes are indeed small. In this situation, the resistance, dissatisfaction, unwillingness, and unacceptance in the



depths of their heart turn gradually to acceptance and acknowledgment of their own shortcomings, deficiencies, and issues. Although they can accept this reality, a persistent emotion arises in the depths of their heart. What is this emotion called? It is inferiority. People who feel inferior do not know what their strengths are. They just think that they are unlikable, always feel stupid, and do not know how to deal with things. In short, they feel they cannot do anything, are unattractive, are not clever, and have slow reactions. They are unremarkable compared to others and do not get good grades in their studies. After growing up in such an environment, this mindset of inferiority gradually takes over. It turns into a kind of lingering emotion that becomes tangled with your heart and fills your mind. Regardless of whether you are already grown, have gone out into the world, are married and established in your career, and regardless of your social status, this feeling of inferiority that was planted in your environment growing up is impossible to get rid of. Even after you start believing in God and join the church, you still think that you have average looks, have poor intellectual caliber, are inarticulate, and cannot do anything. You think, 'I'll just do what I can. I don't need to aspire to be a leader, I don't need to pursue profound truths, I'll just be content with being the least significant one, and let others treat me however they like.' When antichrists and false leaders appear, you feel unable to discern or expose them, that you are not cut out for doing that. You feel that as long as you yourself are not a false leader or antichrist then that is enough, that as long as you do not cause disruptions and disturbances then that is fine, and that it is enough so long as you can stand in your own position. In the depths of your heart, you feel that you are not good enough and are not as good as other

**people, that others are perhaps objects for salvation, and that you, at best, are a service-doer, and so you feel you are not up to the task of pursuing the truth. Irrespective of how much truth you are able to understand, you still feel that, seeing as God has predestined you to have the kind of caliber you do and to look the way you do, then perhaps He has predestined you to be merely a service-doer, and that you have nothing to do with pursuing the truth, becoming a leader, becoming someone in a position of responsibility, or being saved; instead, you are willing to be the most insignificant person”** (The Word, Vol.

6. On the Pursuit of the Truth I. How to Pursue the Truth (1)). Pondering over God’s words, I realized that I was bound up in feelings of inferiority. Ever since I was little, I had always thought I had average looks, was inarticulate, had a subservient personality, often felt despondent and inhibited and suffered from a bad inferiority complex. I had the same problem during my worldly career—my colleagues were well-spoken, adept at flattery, resolute in their management of employees, and some were even highly thought of by their superiors. By contrast, I was inarticulate, incapable of maintaining good relationships with various departments, lacked confidence and resoluteness in my work, and when issues occurred on the production line, others would use their connections and say the right things to get the problem resolved, but not me—I just couldn’t get myself to talk, the problem would remain unresolved, and I’d just lock myself in a bathroom stall and cry. After joining the faith, I became envious of brothers and sisters that were more educated than me, had good caliber, and were steadfast and bold in their work. I felt I just didn’t measure up to them and became quite constrained. As a result, I was often negative, withdrawn, avoidant and suffered from a feeling of inferiority. This is how things went in my partnerships with Chen Xiao and Li Xue—because they were well-spoken and had good caliber and

working ability, I felt inferior to them. I didn't even think it was an issue when I observed Li Xue being self-aggrandizing, treating it as a sign of her resoluteness in her work. I was mired in this feeling of inferiority, my state continually declined, I wasn't doing well in my duty and was ultimately dismissed. Despite the fact that I was once again chosen by my brothers and sisters to serve as a leader, deep down I still felt inferior and believed myself to have poor caliber, to be incapable of doing anything well, and that I was bound to be a laborer and would not attain salvation. I realized that I had been profoundly fettered and bound up in feelings of inferiority. I thought of how God has incarnated and endured all manner of sufferings in order to save mankind, continually expressing truth and watering and suppling mankind so that more people may receive His saving grace, attain salvation and survive the calamities. If people miss out on this opportunity, they will inevitably face the coming calamities and eternal punishment. I didn't understand God's intentions, was mired in negativity and misunderstanding, and had already resigned myself to the idea that I would not attain salvation. I didn't even want to strive and pursue the truth—I was just so rebellious and my actions were hurtful to God. Having realized all this, I felt quite guilty and indebted to God—I couldn't keep wallowing in despondency, so I prayed to God: "O God! I am ready to repent to You. Please guide me out of these negative feelings of inferiority."

Later on, I came across this passage of God's words: **"Finally, there is something I would like to tell you: Do not let a minor feeling or a simple, insignificant emotion tangle you up for the rest of your life so that it affects your attainment of salvation and destroys your hope for salvation, understand? (Yes.) This emotion of yours is not only negative, to be more accurate, it is actually in opposition to God and the truth. You might think that this is an emotion within normal**

**humanity, but in God's eyes, this is not just a simple matter of emotion, but a method of opposition to God. It is a method marked by negative emotions that people use to resist God, God's words and the truth. Therefore, I hope that, assuming you want to pursue the truth, you will examine yourself thoroughly to see whether you are holding onto these negative emotions and stubbornly, foolishly resisting God and competing with Him. If you have discovered the answer through examination, if you have come to a realization and arrived at a clear awareness, then I ask you to first let go of these emotions. Do not cherish them or hold onto them, for they will destroy you, they will destroy your destination, and they will destroy the opportunity and hope you have in pursuing the truth and attaining salvation"** (The Word, Vol. 6. On the Pursuit of the Truth I. How to Pursue the Truth (1)). This passage had a deep impact on me. In the past, I had never thought that negative emotions constituted a serious problem. Through reading God's dissection, I realized that the essence of living in a state of negative emotion is in opposition to God and the truth. If I didn't resolve this issue, I'd forfeit any chance of attaining salvation. I reflected back on my years living with this feeling of inferiority: As soon as I encountered a brother or sister who was more talented, and of greater caliber and working ability than me, I'd feel inferior, would descend into despondency, become resistant and unsatisfied with the reality of my situation, be unwilling to confront and acknowledge my situation and feel powerless. I didn't bother to consider how I could learn from the strengths of others or how to partner with them to do my duty well, instead blaming God for the caliber, gifts and lack of resoluteness He gave me. I lived in a perpetual state of negativity, silently protesting against God and would sometimes not even want to do my duty. I had been bound up in a feeling of inferiority in my faith these years and would often

descend into bouts of despondency and passivity. I lacked the will to pursue the truth and was satisfied to just exert some effort and passively follow along. As a result, despite the fact that I had always performed my duties while believing in God and had many opportunities to practice, my progress in life was minimal—I was just as pitiful and impoverished as ever. God’s work had almost come to a close and I had missed countless opportunities to attain the truth and my life had suffered losses. If I didn’t turn my state around, then I would ruin any chance I had of attaining salvation. So, I prayed to God, seeking to understand what corrupt dispositions lay behind my feeling of inferiority.

Later, I came across this passage of God’s words: **“Instead of searching for the truth, most people have their own petty agendas. Their own interests, face, and the place or standing they hold in other people’s minds are of great importance to them. These are the only things they cherish. They cling to these things with an iron grip and regard them as their very lives. And how they are viewed or treated by God is of secondary importance; for the moment, they ignore that; for the moment, they only consider whether they are the boss of the group, whether other people look up to them, and whether their words carry weight. Their first concern is with occupying that position. When they are in a group, almost all people look for this kind of standing, these kinds of opportunities. When they’re highly talented, of course they want to be top dog; if they are of middling ability, they’ll still want to hold a higher position in the group; and if they hold a low position in the group, being of average caliber and abilities, they, too, will want others to look up to them, they won’t want others to look down on them. These people’s face and dignity are where they draw the line: They have to hold on to these things. They could have no integrity, and**

**be possessed of neither God's approval nor acceptance, but they absolutely cannot lose the respect, status, or esteem they have strived for among others—which is the disposition of Satan. But people have no awareness of this. It is their belief that they must cling to this scrap of face to the very end. They are not aware that only when these vain and superficial things are completely relinquished and put aside will they become a real person. If a person guards these things that should be discarded as life, their life is lost. They do not know what is at stake. And so, when they act, they always hold something back, they always try to protect their own face and status, they put these first, speaking only for their own ends, to their own spurious defense. Everything they do is for themselves. They rush to anything that shines, letting everyone know they were a part of it. It didn't actually have anything to do with them, but they never want to be left in the background, they're always afraid of other people looking down on them, they're always fearful of other people saying they're nothing, that they are incapable of anything, that they have no skills. Is this all not directed by their satanic dispositions? When you are able to let go of things like face and status, you will be much more relaxed and freer; you will have set foot on the path to being honest. But for many, this is not easy to achieve"**

(The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Part Three). Through reading God's words, I realized that I didn't suffer from feelings of inferiority due to my poor caliber, or because I was inarticulate and had average looks, but rather because Satan had brainwashed me with certain faulty views regarding my pursuit. I placed too much importance on reputation and status. I had been subconsciously influenced by satanic poisons like "Man struggles upward; water flows downward," "People need their pride just as a tree needs its bark," and "A man leaves his name behind wherever he

stays, just as a goose utters its cry wherever it flies.” Nothing was more important to me than reputation, status and the respect of others; I thought that only by attaining these things would I be living a meaningful, valuable life. In my worldly career, I was always envious of colleagues that were clever and sharp, articulate, adroit at dealing with others and won the recognition and appreciation of their superiors. I, too, wanted to be appreciated by my superiors like my colleagues. But I felt inferior because I had average looks, was inarticulate and not good at making connections. When I encountered issues, I wouldn’t tell my colleagues, opting instead to lock myself in a bathroom stall and cry to myself. I worried that if anyone else knew about my problems, they would look down on me and think less of me—I really suffered greatly during that time. After putting my faith in God, I continued to live by the viewpoints of nonbelievers, thinking that in order to serve as a leader or supervisor one had to have the air of a leader, to speak with resoluteness, cut a striking figure, be capable of making arrangements and have good working ability, and that in this way, wherever they went they would be respected, could make themselves known and would be highly regarded. When I saw how the brothers and sisters I partnered with were more capable than me, spoke with conviction and had good working ability, I would just think that I was a disappointment in every aspect. Because I failed to attain the respect of others, was not highly regarded and my desire for reputation and status were not satisfied, I no longer wanted to serve as a leader and just wished to shirk away from that environment and join a different group of people. I thought that this would allow me to avoid having my weaknesses and inabilities exposed and I wouldn’t be looked down upon by my peers. Reflecting upon all this, I realized that Satan’s poisons had already taken deep root in my heart—I sought after status and the respect and admiration of others, viewing these

as positive things. As soon as my personal desires were not satisfied, I no longer felt like doing my duty, became negative and antagonistic and was unable to submit to God's sovereignty and arrangements. I came to the realization that I had been too deeply corrupted by Satan and my desire for reputation and status was too strong—if I continued on like that, God would become disgusted with me and eliminate me. I was no longer willing to continue down the wrong path and was ready to repent to God, do my duty practically according to God's demands and submit to His sovereignty and arrangements.

Later on, I came across yet another passage of God's words: **“When feelings of inferiority are implanted deeply in your heart, they not only have a profound effect on you, they also dominate your views on people and things, and your comportment and actions. So, how do those who are dominated by feelings of inferiority perceive people and things? They regard other people as better than themselves, and they also view antichrists as being better than themselves. Even though antichrists have evil dispositions and are of poor humanity, they still treat them as people to emulate and role models to learn from. They even say to themselves, ‘Look, although they have a bad disposition and evil humanity, they are gifted and are more capable in work than me. They can comfortably display their abilities in front of others and speak in front of so many people without blushing or having heart palpitations. They’ve really got guts. I can’t match up to them. I’m just not brave enough.’ What brought this on? It must be said that part of the reason is that your feelings of inferiority have affected your judgment of people’s essences, as well as your perspective and standpoint when it comes to viewing other people. Is this not the case? (It is.)”** (The Word, Vol. 6. On the Pursuit of the Truth I. How to Pursue the Truth (1)). Pondering over God's



words, I realized that feelings of inferiority can influence how we view people and things. I reflected on how when I was mired in feelings of inferiority, I only focused on people's outwardly observable gifts, caliber and ability to speak and act with resoluteness. These traits were the standards by which I judged people's caliber, yet I failed to place importance on discerning their humanity, essence and the paths they walked. I thought of how when I partnered with Li Xue, I only observed how she was articulate and spoke and acted resolutely, but failed to place importance on discerning her behavior. I even thought that, unlike me, she had capital, so it was normal for her to self-aggrandize. I was terribly muddled!

Later on, I began to question whether measuring people's caliber based on their articulateness, gifts, resoluteness in speech, and working ability was the most accurate way of measuring. I then came across this passage of God's words: **"How do we measure people's caliber? The appropriate way to do this is by looking at their attitude toward the truth and whether or not they can comprehend the truth. Some people can learn some specializations very quickly, but when they hear the truth, they become confused and they doze off. In their hearts, they become muddled, nothing they hear goes in, nor do they understand what they are hearing—that is what poor caliber is. With some people, when you tell them they are of poor caliber, they disagree. They think that being highly educated and knowledgeable means they are of good caliber. Does a good education demonstrate high caliber? It does not. How should people's caliber be measured? It should be measured based on the degree to which they comprehend God's words and the truth. This is the most accurate way of doing it. Some people are silver-tongued, quick-witted, and especially skilled at handling other people—but when**

**they listen to sermons, they are never able to understand anything, and when they read God's words, they do not comprehend them. When they talk about their experiential testimony, they always speak words and doctrines, revealing themselves to be mere amateurs, and giving others the sense that they have no spiritual understanding. These are people of poor caliber. So, are such people competent to do work for the house of God? (No.) Why? (They lack the truth principles.) Right, this is something you should understand by now"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of

Christ of the Last Days. To Fulfill One's Duty Well, Understanding the Truth Is Most Crucial).

Through reading God's words, I learned that one shouldn't measure people's caliber based upon how educated they are, what outwardly observable gifts they possess, how quick-witted they may be, or how articulate, but rather based on whether they are able to gain an accurate understanding of God's words and able to comprehend the reality of God's words—that is, whether they can comprehend God's intentions through His words and come to know their corrupt disposition and essence through God's words. I thought of how, despite the fact that Li Xue had certain gifts, was articulate and acted resolutely, she was unable to discuss her true understanding of herself or any experiential testimony of God's words. Brothers and sisters had pointed out her self-aggrandizing behavior on multiple occasions, but despite acknowledging the issue, she never comprehended the nature and serious consequences of such behavior. While doing her duty, she constantly aggrandized herself and would even put down others while exalting herself and barely reflected on or gained knowledge of this problem even after she was dismissed. From this, I saw that Li Xue possessed certain gifts, but was not someone with good caliber. I thought of how God dissected the figure of Paul—Paul was gifted, wrote many letters, and spread the gospel to many people, but he was unable to

comprehend the truth and ultimately was unable to recognize his satanic, God-resisting nature. As such, Paul could not be considered to have good caliber. Realizing all this, I felt a bit more clear. I saw that I didn't understand the truth and always thought that being well-educated, articulate, and resolute meant having good caliber, and lacking these traits was a sign of poor caliber. As a result, I often defined myself as a person of poor caliber who was not qualified to serve as leader or worker. After reading God's words, I realized that to measure someone's caliber, one should mainly look to see how well that person comprehends God's words, whether they can comprehend the truth, and whether they can do their duty according to principle. The most accurate way to view people and things is according to God's words.

Later on, I came across another two passages of God's words. Almighty God says: **"So, how can you accurately evaluate and know yourself, and break away from the feeling of inferiority? You should take God's words as the basis for gaining knowledge of yourself, learning what your humanity, caliber, and talent are like, and what strengths you have. For example, suppose that you used to like singing and did it well, but some people kept criticizing you and belittling you, saying that you were tone-deaf and that your singing was out of tune, so now you feel that you cannot sing well and no longer dare to do it in front of others. Because those worldly folks, those muddleheaded people and mediocre people, made inaccurate evaluations and judgments about you, the rights that your humanity deserves were curtailed, and your talent was stifled. As a result, you do not dare to even sing a song, and you are only brave enough to let go and sing out loud when no one is around or you are just by yourself. Because you ordinarily feel so horribly repressed, when you are not alone you dare**

**not sing a song; you dare to sing only when you are alone, enjoying the time when you can sing out loud and clear, and what a wonderful, liberating time that is! Is that not so? Because of the harm that people have done to you, you do not know or cannot see clearly what it is that you can actually do, what you are good at, and what you are not good at. In this kind of situation, you must make a correct evaluation and take the correct measure of yourself according to God's words. You should establish what you have learned and where your strengths lie, and go out and do whatever it is that you can do; as for those things which you cannot do, your shortcomings and deficiencies, you should reflect on and know them, and you should also accurately evaluate and know what your caliber is like, and whether it is good or bad. If you cannot understand or gain clear knowledge of your own problems, then ask the people around you with understanding to make an appraisal of you. Regardless of whether what they say is accurate, it will at least give you something to reference and consider and will enable you to have a basic judgment or characterization of yourself. You can then solve the essential problem of negative emotions like inferiority, and gradually emerge from them. Such feelings of inferiority are easy to resolve if one can discern them, awaken to them, and seek the truth"**

**(The Word, Vol. 6. On the Pursuit of the Truth I. How to Pursue the Truth (1)). "What God wants to see is not that you give up your pursuit of the truth, nor does He want to see the attitude of someone who writes themselves off as a lost cause. He wants to see that once you comprehend all these true facts, you can go and pursue the truth in a more steadfast, bold and assured manner, recognizing clearly that God is a righteous God. When you come to the end of the road, as long as you have reached the standard God has set for you, and you are on the road to salvation, God**

**will not give up on you”** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Only by Resolving One’s Notions Can One Embark on the Right Track of Belief in God (2)). In God’s words I found a path to resolve my feelings of inferiority. I had to view things according to God’s words, gain an accurate understanding of my strengths and weaknesses, do my best at what I was capable of doing, and handle correctly and seek the truth to resolve that which I did not grasp or failed to accomplish. I thought back to when I first started serving as a leader and supervisor: At first, I was able to do some actual work through diligent cooperation, but later I was dismissed because I was negative, slacked off and got poor results in my duty due to living by my corrupt disposition. My poor caliber was certainly not the only reason I was dismissed. In fact, my brothers and sisters all said that I had average caliber, not poor caliber. If I worked diligently when partnered with other brothers and sisters, I was still able to get some work done. After realizing all this, I gained a proper attitude toward myself—I didn’t have the best caliber, and I couldn’t quite grasp the principles with regard to certain issues, but I could always seek help from my brothers and sisters to make up for my deficiencies and work hard to improve my caliber. In this way, I would be able to make some progress. Having made these realizations, I found a path of practice and felt much more at ease. I was no longer willing to be fettered by feelings of inferiority and was ready to do my duty well and focus on practicing the truth to satisfy God.

On one occasion later on, I attended a small group gathering with a sister named Xiaoye who served as textual work supervisor. Xiaoye was able to communicate God’s intentions through her fellowship on His words and integrate lessons from her own experience into her fellowship, all of which was quite instructive for those in attendance. The brothers and sisters all nodded and took notes throughout her fellowship. Seeing this, I once

again began to get that creeping sense of inferiority, feeling that Xiaoye was more capable than me and more qualified to serve as a leader. However, as these feelings of inferiority arose, I recalled a passage of God's words: **"You should establish what you have learned and where your strengths lie, and go out and do whatever it is that you can do; as for those things which you cannot do, your shortcomings and deficiencies, you should reflect on and know them, and you should also accurately evaluate and know what your caliber is like, and whether it is good or bad"** (The Word, Vol. 6. On the Pursuit of the Truth I. How to Pursue the Truth (1)). Indeed, everyone has different caliber and different strengths—this is the result of God's sovereignty and arrangements. No matter what kind of caliber I had, I should always fulfill my responsibilities and duties. I didn't have the best caliber and was not quite as articulate as others, but as long as I had some understanding and experience of God's words, I should set the right intentions and fellowship on my understanding to fulfill my responsibility. That is just what I ought to do. After realizing this, I felt a lot better, was no longer influenced by feelings of inferiority, was ready to practice according to God's words, fellowship on everything I had an understanding of and fulfill my responsibility. After that, I then fellowshiped on my understanding and knowledge of God's words. When I saw how my fellowship was beneficial and helpful to the brothers and sisters, I gave thanks to God! It has all been through the enlightenment and guidance of God's word that I have made progress and gained what I have.

## 18. When My Parents Were Cleared Out From the Church

By Ai Yi, China

One day in October 2018, a leader told me, “Your parents were cleared out from the church.” I was stunned—I simply couldn’t believe it. My parents had done disruptive things, I knew, but surely not bad enough to get them cleared out? I just sat there, with my heart in turmoil. My older sister had previously been kicked out by the church for being an accomplice to an antichrist and failing to repent regardless of all efforts to fellowship with her. Now my parents were cleared out, too, leaving me as our family’s only believer. In that moment, I felt so alone. It had been over two decades since our family joined the faith and we’d endured CCP oppression throughout that time. My dad had been arrested twice for sharing the gospel, and had spent five years in prison. My mom, my sister and I had lived without a fixed home, moving all over the place to avoid arrest. We had been through all sorts of ups and downs, and now God’s work was nearly at an end. So how could they be cleared out of the church? They’d had a really tough time and suffered a lot. Was it all in vain? At that thought, I couldn’t hold back the tears. In my heart I tried reasoning with God: My parents may not have achieved distinction, but they had suffered plenty. Considering their many years of sacrifice, didn’t they deserve one more chance to repent? Even if it just meant staying on as laborers! The more I thought that way, the more painful and dark it was for me, and I lost the drive to do my duty. The sister I was paired with offered a word for the wise: “When something like this happens, you have to accept it from God—you can’t complain. Whatever God does is righteous.” Although I understood her reasoning at the time, I just couldn’t shift my thinking.

A couple of weeks later I read the papers on my parents being cleared out. They told how my dad was particularly arrogant, always going his own way in handling general affairs rather than doing his duty according to principle. He wouldn't accept suggestions from the brothers and sisters, which had caused the church to suffer significant monetary losses. What's more, he had continued delivering books of God's words despite being fully aware of safety concerns relating to him specifically. He had simply dismissed the advice of brothers and sisters and carried on regardless, with the result that he was arrested and imprisoned and the books were seized. This had damaging consequences for the church. My dad had also twisted things when my sister was expelled, saying it only happened because the leader had it in for her. He'd also made a big deal about some corruption displayed by the leader, threatening to discredit her and bring her down. Some of the others, having been misled into taking his side, had become biased against the leader, and this had hindered the leader from doing her duty as normal. The work of the church had been seriously disrupted by my dad's actions and conduct, and he had shown zero remorse or repentance for the evil that he had done. It ended with him being classified as an evil person and cleared out from the church. For her part, my mom was cleared out—also in accordance with principle—because she wouldn't stop arguing against my sister's expulsion. She had kept on complaining about the leader in front of the other brothers and sisters, provoking distrust on both sides, and had twisted facts during gatherings, arguing the case for several people who had been expelled and saying that the leader had been out to get them. That, too, had seriously disrupted the life of the church. Despite plenty of efforts by brothers and sisters to fellowship with her, she had flatly refused to accept the truth. She hadn't seen things in accordance with the truth principles, and had taken the side of evil people in interrupting the church's



work. With no sense of repentance, she was eventually cleared out from the church. Given all of their evil deeds, I knew in principle it was right that my mom and dad should be cleared out, but when I thought about it actually happening I didn't know how I'd manage. It was very distressing. Reading the materials on their being cleared out left me feeling numb, and I couldn't stop crying. I started reasoning with God: "God, You love humankind. My parents have been believers for more than 20 years and have been through so much hardship. Aren't they due some recognition for everything they've sacrificed?" I was living in negativity and misunderstanding. With all of my family cleared out, leaving myself as the only believer, I wondered how I could continue on the path. For over two years I remained in this confused state, and eventually I was dismissed for not achieving anything in my duty. I felt such anguish, and prayed over and over in tears, "Oh God! I have resented and misunderstood You on account of my parents' being cleared out from the church. I know this is a dangerous state to be in, but I don't have the strength to shake it off. God, please guide and save me."

Then, in my devotionals, I read some of God's words. Almighty God says: **"Upon knowing that God loves humankind, they define Him as a symbol of love: They believe that no matter what people do, no matter how they behave, no matter how they treat God, and no matter how rebellious they might be, none of this really matters, for God has love, and His love is unlimited and immeasurable; God has love, so He can be tolerant of people; and God has love, so He can be merciful toward people, merciful toward their immaturity, merciful toward their ignorance, and merciful toward their rebelliousness. Is this really the way it is? For some people, when they have experienced God's patience once or even a few times, they will treat these experiences as capital in their own understanding of God, believing that He will forever be**

patient and merciful toward them, and then, over the course of their lives, they take this patience of God and regard it as the standard by which He treats them. There are also those who, after having experienced God's tolerance once, will forever define God as tolerant—and in their minds, this tolerance is indefinite, unconditional, and even totally unprincipled. Are such beliefs correct?" (The Word, Vol. 2. On Knowing God. How to Know God's Disposition and the Results His Work Shall Achieve). **"God is righteous in His treatment of each and every person, and He is earnest in His approach to the work of conquering and saving people. This is His management. He treats every single person seriously, and not like a pet to play with. God's love for humans is not the pampering or spoiling kind, nor are His mercy and tolerance toward humankind indulgent or unmindful. On the contrary, God's love for humans involves cherishing, pitying, and respecting life; His mercy and tolerance convey His expectations of them, and are what humanity needs to survive. God is alive, and God actually exists; His attitude toward humankind is principled, not at all a pack of dogmatic rules, and it can change. His intentions for humanity are gradually changing and transforming with time, depending on circumstances as they arise, and along with the attitude of each and every person. Therefore, you should know in your heart with absolute clarity that the essence of God is immutable, and that His disposition will issue forth at different times and in different contexts. You might not think that this is a serious matter, and you might use your own personal notions to imagine how God should do things. However, there are times when the polar opposite of your viewpoint is true, and by using your own personal notions to attempt to gauge God, you have already angered Him. This is because God does not operate the way you think He does, nor will He**

**treat this matter like you say He will”** (The Word, Vol. 2. On Knowing God. How to Know God’s Disposition and the Results His Work Shall Achieve). After reading God’s words I understood that God is loving, but God’s love for man is built on principle. It is not blind and unprincipled, like the kind of love that people have. God is a righteous God, and He takes a stance on the conduct and actions of every person. God has love and mercy for those who love the truth yet have transgressed. But as to evil people, those who are averse to the truth and disrupt the work of the church, He condemns and eliminates them. Just because God is loving doesn’t mean He has compassion and tolerance for evil people, and permits them to disrupt the church’s work. I had misunderstood God’s disposition and essence and defined Him according to my own notions. I had assumed that since God loves humans He would keep giving us chances to repent, no matter how much evil we do, provided that we follow and make sacrifices for Him. That was why I hadn’t been able to accept my parents being cleared out, and had started reasoning with God and resisting Him. Thinking back, the church had given my parents plenty of chances before clearing them out, and it was only because they never repented that things reached that point. God’s disposition is righteous and holy. So long as people are willing to repent for transgressions and displays of corruption, God is extremely merciful and tolerant. But people like my parents, who did so much evil without truly repenting and whose evildoing actually worsened, are in fact evil people, and God cannot keep on showing mercy and tolerance to such people. In particular, He cannot be lenient to them just because they’re long-time believers and have suffered much for the faith.

One day, I read another passage of God’s words: **“People say that God is a righteous God, and that as long as man follows Him to the very end, He will surely be impartial toward man, for He is most**

righteous. If man follows Him to the very end, could He cast man aside? I am impartial toward all men, and judge all men with My righteous disposition, yet there are suitable conditions to the requirements I make of man, and that which I require must be accomplished by all men, regardless of who they are. I care not how your qualifications are, or how long you have held them; I care only whether you follow My way, and whether or not you love and thirst for the truth. If you lack the truth, and instead bring shame upon My name, and do not act according to My way, merely following without care or concern, then at that time I will strike you down and punish you for your evil, and what will you have to say then? Will you be able to say that God is not righteous? Today, if you have complied with the words I have spoken, then you are the kind of person whom I approve. You say you have always suffered whilst following God, that you have followed Him through thick and thin, and have shared with Him the good times and the bad, but you have not lived out the words spoken by God; you wish only to run about for God and expend yourself for God each day, and have never thought to live out a life of meaning. You also say, 'In any case, I believe God is righteous. I have suffered for Him, run around for Him, and devoted myself for Him, and I have worked hard despite not receiving any recognition; He is sure to remember me.' It is true that God is righteous, yet this righteousness is untainted by any impurities: It contains no human will, and it is not tainted by the flesh, or by human transactions. All who are rebellious and in opposition, all who are not in compliance with His way, will be punished; none is forgiven, and none is spared!" (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. The Experiences of Peter: His Knowledge of Chastisement and Judgment). I learned from God's words that God's righteousness isn't like I

thought—that what we get back depends on how much we put in. God is not required to favor those who run around expending themselves, working and suffering for Him. For God, there is no such thing as “There is merit in working hard, regardless of contribution.” God doesn’t determine a person’s outcome based on how much they suffer for the work, or their seniority. He doesn’t look at how much they sacrifice externally. What matters is whether they pursue the truth and put it into practice, and whether there is a change in their life disposition. They’ll never win God’s approval if they don’t practice His words, no matter how great their seniority may be or how much they’ve suffered for the work. They’ll be righteously punished by God for the evil they have done. I had been gauging God’s righteousness with a transactional mindset. I’d thought that because my parents had sacrificed and suffered plenty during their years of faith, they ought to have more chances to repent and be kept in the church, no matter how much evil they did. Otherwise, it wouldn’t be fair to them. But my way of thinking was all wrong. I thought of Paul, crisscrossing Europe to spread the gospel of the Lord. He was arrested a number of times and suffered plenty, but everywhere he went he stood high and bore witness to himself. Ultimately, he said that he lived as Christ, and dying would be a gain. As a result he was revered for two thousand years. In people’s minds he took a place that was higher than that of the Lord Jesus, and ultimately he was punished by God for resisting Him. I saw from this that God doesn’t look at how much people work and suffer externally. He takes retribution, according to their deeds, against those who do evil and offend His disposition yet stubbornly refuse to repent. My parents, for example, worked, suffered and sacrificed plenty for God, but they would never accept the truth. Everything they did served to disrupt church work and undermine normal church life, harming the brothers’ and sisters’ lives and damaging church interests. Clearing

them out from the church complied with principle and was the righteousness of God. Not understanding God's righteous disposition, I had clung to the transactional notion that "There is merit in working hard, regardless of contribution." I had tried reasoning with God about it, and making a fuss, all the while living in a negative state and being defiant toward God. I was so rebellious! Realizing this, I felt terrible and remorseful, and I prayed, weeping, "God! I've had faith in You all these years without knowing You at all. I've gauged Your love and righteousness according to my own notions and imaginings, always going up against You and trying to reason with You. Oh God, now I can see that my parents being cleared out was Your righteousness." I felt greatly at ease after saying that prayer.

Later on, I reflected that it was because of the strength of my affections for my parents that I had been so upset about the church clearing them out. It made me think of some of God's words: **"God created this world and brought man, a living being unto which He bestowed life, into it. Next, man came to have parents and kin, and was no longer alone. Ever since man first laid eyes on this material world, he was destined to exist within the ordination of God. The breath of life from God supports each and every living being throughout growth into adulthood. During this process, no one feels that man is growing up under the care of God; rather, they believe that man is doing so under the loving care of his parents, and that it is his own life instinct that directs his growing up. This is because man knows not who bestowed his life, or from whence it came, much less the way in which the instinct of life creates miracles. He knows only that food is the basis on which his life continues, that perseverance is the source of his existence, and that the beliefs in his mind are the capital upon which his survival depends. Of God's grace**

**and provision, man is utterly oblivious, and thus does he fritter away the life bestowed upon him by God.... Not a single one of this humanity that God cares for day and night takes it upon themselves to worship Him. God only continues to work on man, for whom He holds out no expectations, as He has planned. He does so in the hope that one day, man will awaken from his dream and suddenly realize the value and meaning of life, the price God paid for all that He has given him, and the eager solicitude with which God waits for man to turn back to Him”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. God Is the Source of Man’s Life).

**“Not a single nonbeliever has faith that there is a God, or that He created the heavens and earth and all things, or that man is created by God. There are even some who say, ‘Life is given to man by their parents, and they should honor them.’ Where does such a thought or view come from? Does it come from Satan? It is millennia of traditional culture that have educated and misled man in this way, causing them to deny God’s creation and sovereignty. Without Satan misleading and controlling people, mankind would investigate God’s work and read His words, and they would know that they are created by God, that their life is given by God; they would know that everything they have is given by God, and that it is God whom they should thank. Should anyone do us a good turn, we should accept it from God—in particular our parents, who gave birth to and raised us; this is all arranged by God. God holds sovereignty over all; man is just a tool for service. If someone can set their parents aside, or their husband (or wife) and children, in order to expend themselves for God, then that person will be stronger and have a greater sense of justice before Him”** (The Word, Vol.

3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Only by Recognizing One’s Own Misguided Views Can One Truly Transform). From God’s words I understood that God is the source

of human life, and everything we possess is bestowed on us by God; that we've only gotten to where we are today through God's care and protection, and that those who are gracious or helpful toward us are so at the arrangement of God. We should accept this from God and be grateful to God for His love. I realized that instead of going by God's words I had only been thinking of the goodness my parents had shown me. I hadn't seen how God's rule and arrangements were behind everything my parents did, and that it was God's care, protection and guidance that brought me to the present day. I hadn't thanked God for His care and protection or repaid His love. Instead, I had been rebellious and defiant toward God. The more I reflected on this, the more unconscionable I felt I had been. I had let God down!

I read another passage of God's words later: **"Who is Satan, who are demons, and who are God's enemies if not resisters who do not believe in God? Are they not those people who are rebellious against God? Are they not those who claim to have faith, yet who lack truth? Are they not those who merely seek to obtain blessings while being unable to bear witness for God? You still mingle with those demons today and treat them with conscience and love, but in this case are you not extending good intentions toward Satan? Are you not in league with demons? If people have made it to this point and are still unable to distinguish between good and evil, and continue to blindly be loving and merciful without any desire to seek God's intentions or being able in any way to take God's intentions as their own, then their endings will be all the more wretched. Anyone who does not believe in the God in the flesh is an enemy of God. If you can bear conscience and love toward an enemy, do you not lack a sense of justice? If you are compatible with those which I detest and with which I disagree, and still bear love or**



**personal feelings toward them, then are you not rebellious? Are you not intentionally resisting God? Does such a person possess truth? If people bear conscience toward enemies, love for demons, and mercy for Satan, then are they not intentionally disrupting God's work?"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. God and Man Will Enter Into Rest Together). God's words revealed my precise state. God requires that we love what He loves and hate what He hates. Those who hate the truth and resist God are essentially evil people who God detests and hates, so we should hate them, too. I hadn't been discerning my parents' essence in accordance with God's words. No matter how much they harmed the church's work, I had taken their side, reasoning with God and resisting Him. I had even lost heart for doing my duty. But now I understood why God said: **"Feelings are His enemy"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Interpretations of the Mysteries of "God's Words to the Entire Universe," Chapter 28). Out of affections, I had borne love and mercy toward evil people. I had even hoped that God would give them another chance to repent and stay on in the church. I had been so foolish! Evil people never truly repent, no matter what. It's something that is determined by their essence. Allowing my parents to remain in the church would have been to condone the evil they were continuing to do and their disruption of church work. It would have been standing with evil people against God!

Another passage of God's words that I read later, somewhat enlightened me. God's words say: **"One day, when you understand some of the truth, you will no longer think that your mother is the best person, or that your parents are the best people. You will realize that they are also members of the corrupt human race, and that their corrupt dispositions are all the same. All that sets them apart is the physical blood relationship with you. If they don't believe in God, then they are the same as the nonbelievers. You will no longer look at them**

from the perspective of a family member, or from the perspective of your fleshly relationship, but from the side of the truth. What are the main aspects you should look at? You should look at their views on belief in God, their views on the world, their views on handling matters, and most importantly, their attitudes toward God. If you assess these aspects accurately, you will be able to see clearly whether they are good or bad people. One day you may see clearly that they are people with corrupt dispositions just like you. It may be even clearer that they are not the kind-hearted people who have real love for you that you imagined them to be, nor are they able to lead you to the truth or onto the right path in life at all. You may see clearly that what they have done for you is of no great benefit to you, and that it is of no use to you in taking the right path in life. You may also find that many of their practices and opinions are contrary to the truth, that they are of the flesh, and that this makes you despise them, and feel repulsed and averse. If you come to see these things, you will then be able to treat your parents correctly in your heart, and you will no longer miss them, worry about them, or be unable to live apart from them. They have completed their mission as parents, so you will no longer treat them as the closest people to you or idolize them. Instead, you will treat them as ordinary people, and at that time, you will completely escape the bondage of feelings and truly emerge from your feelings and family affection” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Only Resolving One’s Corrupt Disposition Can Bring About True Transformation). This was deeply moving to read. Because of the strength of my affections for my parents, I had seen only how good they were to me, and not their attitude toward the truth and toward God. I hadn’t been able to clearly see their essence or the path they were on, and that’s why I hadn’t correctly dealt with the matter of their

being cleared out. Caught up in affections, I'd tried reasoning with God, and for over two years I had been negative and defiant. My life had been badly damaged, and I'd committed transgressions. Little by little, through the watering and sustenance of God's words, my hard, rebellious heart had been awakened and my misunderstanding of God erased. I now feel much freer and have recovered the drive to do my duty. Thanks be to God for His salvation.

## 19. Why I Didn't Dare Open Up

By Christina, USA

In mid-May of 2021, Jen, our leader, had me write an evaluation of Laura. She said Laura was arrogant, self-righteous, and always passing judgment on leaders and workers. She was not a right person. Jen's evaluation of Laura was different from my own. When I'd interacted with Laura in the past, she hadn't been as Jen had said. But I worried that if I told the truth, Jen would say I lacked discernment and would get a bad impression of me. Then she might not assign me important projects in the future. So I bent to Jen's will, went along with her appraisal, and said Laura was arbitrarily judging others. Not long after, Laura was replaced. Later on, I found out that Laura had reported Jen for failing to do actual work and being a false leader, which led Jen to suppress and punish her by claiming she was passing judgment on leaders and workers. Jen was eventually exposed as a false leader and replaced. After I heard about this, I thought back on my behavior in writing the evaluation and felt regretful. By reading God's word and reflecting on myself, I realized I had been willing to lie and go along with condemning Laura to make a good impression on the leader. I was truly lacking in humanity. The more I reflected, the more disgust and hate I felt toward myself. I thought about writing an essay on this failure to share with the brothers and sisters as a warning. But I had my worries. I thought, "If I write all about my corruption and wrong motives during the evaluation, what will the brothers and sisters think of me? If they look down on me and spurn me, my reputation will be reduced to nothing, and I'll be too ashamed to show my face before them again." I also thought about how Laura used to be pretty close with me, often confiding in me if she was having issues. What would she think if she found out that

evaluation of mine had been done with a corrupt disposition? Would she be disappointed in me and cut off contact? If the upper leadership found out, would they say I had poor character and assign me to a different duty? Thinking of all this, I felt just awful. I'd done something truly shameful and it was hard to talk about it. I didn't want to face up to what I'd done; I just wanted to move on. I didn't want to write about it.

Afterward, I started to think the matter over. Why wasn't I willing to mention this failure? Why wasn't I willing to open up and lay myself bare? What corrupt disposition was constraining me? One day, while watching an experiential testimony video, I saw a passage of God's words: **"Regardless of the context, no matter what duty they do, an antichrist will try and give the impression that they aren't weak, that they are always strong, full of faith, and never negative, so that people never see their real stature or real attitude toward God. In fact, in the depths of their heart, do they really believe there is nothing they cannot do? Do they genuinely believe that they are without weakness, negativity, or revelations of corruption? Absolutely not. They are good at putting on an act, adept at hiding things. They like showing people their strong and splendid side; they don't want them to see the side of them that is weak and true. Their purpose is obvious: It is, quite simply, to keep face, to protect the place they have in people's hearts. They think that if they open up before others about their own negativity and weakness, if they reveal the side of them that is rebellious and corrupt, this will be grievous damage to their status and reputation—more trouble than it's worth. So they would rather die than admit to having times when they are weak, rebellious, and negative. And if a day does come when everyone sees the side of them that is weak and rebellious, when they see that they are corrupt, and have not changed at all, they will still**

**keep putting on an act. They think that if they admit to having a corrupt disposition, to being an ordinary person, someone who is insignificant, then they will lose their place in people's hearts, will lose everyone's worship and adoration, and thus will have utterly failed. And so, whatever happens, they will not open up to people; whatever happens, they will not give their power and status to anyone else; instead, they try as hard as they can to compete, and will never give up"** (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Nine (Part Ten)). From God's words, I learned that antichrists are good at putting on an act. They don't want anyone to see their dark side, and they don't open up about their corruption and rebelliousness. They also always avoid speaking about their failures and errors, instead putting up a positive, tenacious and impressive facade to win people's respect and a place in their hearts. I realized that what I had done and revealed was no different from an antichrist. I had come to recognize my corrupt disposition in my going along with the false leader in condemning Laura, but I wasn't willing to open up to everyone, because this was a failure. If I made my motives and corruption during that time public, then everyone would see how I lacked discernment and caved easily. I was afraid everyone would look down on and spurn me, and I might even lose my duty. I saw how I prized reputation and status over practicing truth and being honest. I simply didn't love the truth or positive things. Rather, I loved reputation and status, and was adept at putting on an act, just like an antichrist. I was a deceitful person.

Later, I came across two more passages of God's words: **"Everyone makes mistakes. Everyone has faults and flaws. And actually, everyone has the same corrupt disposition. Do not think yourself more noble, perfect, and kind than others; that is being utterly unreasonable. Once people's corrupt dispositions and the essence and true face of their**

**corruption are clear to you, you will not try to cover up your own mistakes, nor will you hold other people's mistakes against them—you will be able to face both correctly. Only then will you become insightful and not do foolish things, which will make you wise. Those who are not wise are foolish people, and they always dwell on their minor mistakes while sneaking around behind the scenes. It is disgusting to witness”**

(The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. The Principles That Should Guide One's Conduct). **“What kind of disposition is it when people always put up a front, always whitewash themselves, always put on airs so that others think highly of them, and cannot see their faults or shortcomings, when they always try to present their best side to people? This is arrogance, fakery, hypocrisy, it is the disposition of Satan, it is something wicked. Take members of the satanic regime: No matter how much they fight, feud, or kill in the dark, no one is allowed to report or expose them. They are afraid that people will see their demonic face, and they do everything they can to cover it up. In public, they do their utmost to whitewash themselves, saying how much they love the people, how great, glorious and infallible they are. This is the nature of Satan. The most prominent feature of Satan's nature is trickery and deception. And what is the aim of this trickery and deception? To hoodwink people, to stop them from seeing its essence and true colors, and thus achieve the aim of prolonging its rule. Ordinary people may lack such power and status, but they, too, wish to make others hold a favorable view of them, and for people to have a high estimation of them, and elevate them to a high status in their hearts. This is a corrupt disposition, and if people do not understand the truth, they are incapable of recognizing this”** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. The Principles That Should Guide One's Conduct). From God's words, I realized

that no one is perfect; we all have deficiencies, can make mistakes, and reveal our corrupt dispositions. People who truly have humanity and rationality can properly confront their deficiencies and issues. After doing wrong, they're able to face their mistakes and seek the truth to resolve their corruption. The disingenuous and deceitful are those who, after making mistakes or revealing their corruption, can't face up to their problems or admit their errors, always putting on an act to cover up their true self, making their character appear unblemished. I had been deeply corrupted by Satan and was beset with all manner of corrupt dispositions. It's normal to experience deviations and reveal corruption. Even if I didn't open up, those corrupt dispositions would still be hidden within, so wouldn't I still be a corrupt person? When I made my evaluation of Laura, I went along with the false leader in judging and condemning Laura to maintain my image in the eyes of the leader; there was no denying this. If I were a person with humanity and rationality, I'd have faced up to this issue, revealing to the others how I'd displayed corruption, how I'd been exposed and judged by God's words, and what I'd learned about my corrupt disposition, so that everyone could see the real me. But I'd always put on a false front after displaying corruption, hoping to safeguard my reputation and image in the minds of others. How shameful and disgusting I was! I always thought that if the corruption I'd revealed was just a small issue—an obvious corrupt disposition that was common among many people—then even if I opened up, it probably wouldn't damage my reputation too much, so I could lay myself bare before people. But this time, I'd gone along with a false leader in condemning someone. This was a serious transgression—it wasn't an easy thing to bring up. It would show people that I had poor character and was undignified, and severely damage my reputation. So I wasn't willing to open up. Instead, I played mind games with others, keeping silent about it—



I was truly deceitful! Only then did I realize that my unwillingness to open up about my corruption was not only a sign of my vanity and pride, but it also betrayed my hidden deceitful and evil satanic dispositions.

Afterward, I continued reflecting on this problem and I read this passage of God's words: **"When something happens, they may not speak up or express any view lightly, but always stay silent. This does not mean that they are reasonable; on the contrary, it shows that they are quite well disguised, that they have things hidden, that their shrewdness runs deep. If you do not open up to anyone else, can you open up to God? And if you are not genuine, even with God, and cannot open up to Him, can you then give your heart over to Him? Certainly not. You cannot be one at heart with God, but are keeping your heart apart from His! Are you able to open up and say what's really in your heart when fellowshiping with others? If someone always says what's truly in their heart, if they speak honestly, if they speak plainly, if they are sincere, and not at all perfunctory while performing their duty, and if they can practice the truth they understand, then this person has a hope of gaining the truth. If a person always covers themselves up and conceals their heart so that no one can see them clearly, if they give a false impression to deceive others, then they are in grave danger, they are in great trouble, it will be very difficult for them to gain the truth. You can see from someone's daily life and their words and actions what their prospects are. If this person is always pretending, always putting on airs, then this person is not someone who accepts the truth, and they will be revealed and eliminated sooner or later"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. In Giving One's Heart to God, One Can Obtain the Truth). God revealed how those that put up a false front can't face their own problems, don't open up when they

make mistakes, and always cover them up by deceiving others. Their hearts are closed off. Such people are particularly evil—they are outright deceitful. God likes honest people and detests those who are deceitful. Deceitful people will be eventually exposed and eliminated. I used to think putting up a false front was just a sign of coveting reputation and status, and didn't mean one was like an evil person or an antichrist that commits evil deeds, disrupts church work and harms others. I didn't think it would lead to being eliminated. But from God's words I realized that these were all just my notions and imaginings and that I had a distorted view of things. I'd ignored my conscience in condemning Laura along with the false leader, thus abetting an evildoer. God was already well aware of my transgression, but I wasn't willing to bring it up after the fact, and tried to keep up a pretense to win the admiration of others. This revealed that I didn't love the truth and hadn't truly repented. I didn't practice the truth and even dealt in deceit and trickery: What would keep God from detesting me? If I kept this up, I'd certainly be exposed and eliminated. Through reflection, I saw how failing to practice honesty and not opening up has severe consequences. I felt quite scared and so I wanted to hurriedly turn things around.

Later, I came across more of God's words: **"You must be able to reflect and know yourself. You must have the courage to open up and lay yourself bare in the presence of the brothers and sisters, and fellowship your true state. If you do not dare to lay bare or dissect your corrupt disposition; if you do not dare to admit your mistakes, then you are not in pursuit of the truth, much less are you someone who knows themselves"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. The Most Fundamental Practice of Being an Honest Person). **"Irrespective of what duty people perform, or what they do, which is more important—their vanity and pride, or God's glory? Which should people choose? (God's glory.)"**

**Which are more important—your responsibilities, or your own interests? Your responsibilities are what is most important, and you are duty-bound to them. ... When you practice according to the truth principles, there will be a positive effect, and you will bear testimony to God, which is a way to bring shame upon Satan and bear testimony to God. Using various methods to bear testimony to God and to make Satan see your determination to rebel against and reject Satan: this is shaming Satan and testifying to God—it is something that is positive and in line with God’s intentions”** (God’s Fellowship). From within God’s words, I found a path of practice. Whatever corruption we reveal or mistakes we make, we should be brave enough to admit them, open up, and dissect our corrupt dispositions in fellowship with others. This is the way to cut ties with Satan, use real actions to shame Satan, and bear testimony for God. It demonstrates true repentance. Regardless of whether our vanity, pride, reputation and status take a hit after opening up, we should rebel against ourselves to practice the truth and prioritize bearing testimony for God. In my evaluation of Laura, I’d contradicted facts and gone along with a false leader in condemning her. Through this experience, I’d gained some understanding of my corrupt disposition. I knew I should open up and lay myself bare before the brothers and sisters. That was what I should do. If I failed to open up before everyone in order to protect my vanity and reputation, and was unable to bear witness to the lessons I learned from reading God’s word, I’d be falling for Satan’s plot and lose my testimony. Also, I previously had this fallacious notion that discussing my failures was shameful and was not a kind of testimony. Afterward, I understood that so long as I could let go of my vanity and pride, not be tied down by my corrupt disposition, open up in fellowship about my failure and truly repent,

this was indeed a kind of testimony. Once I realized this, all my worries went away.

After that, I opened up in fellowship to everyone about my experience and, to my surprise, the brothers and sisters said: “Hearing about your experience is quite helpful. We also often reveal the same kind of corrupt disposition, except we don’t notice promptly and it goes unnoticed. Your fellowship about how you recognized your corruption and gained an understanding of its essence through the judgment and revelation of God’s words has been very edifying for us.” Later, the brothers and sisters fellowshipped with me on two passages of God’s words. They helped me gain a deeper understanding of the essence and consequences of my not evaluating people objectively. Failing to objectively evaluate people is the same as falsely accusing or framing them; it is a form of exclusion and suppression. If I arbitrarily condemn someone and it causes them to become negative, or a false leader uses that condemnation as grounds for punishing someone, preventing them from continuing in their duty, and hampering their life entry, then I have committed evil. I also gained a clearer understanding of which principles one must practice when evaluating people. Later on, when Laura found about all this, she didn’t think badly of me; if I went to her with questions, she answered me just as sincerely as before. Neither did the church reassign or dismiss me. These results entirely upended my original notions and imaginings. I felt incredibly ashamed. This all made me much more aware of God’s faithfulness and righteousness. As long as we practice according to God’s words, we’ll have a path. Thanks be to God!

## 20. Envy Is the Rottenness of the Bones

By Su Wan, China

In November of 2020, I was elected as a team leader in charge of watering work. At the time I was so happy, and felt that being elected as a team leader meant that in terms of comprehending the truth and entering into life, I was more advanced than the other brothers and sisters. I wanted to do my duty well so everyone would think well of me. After some time, efforts to water newcomers achieved some results, and most newcomers attended gatherings regularly and did their duty. The brothers and sisters said that my fellowshiping about the truth was clear, and that I could resolve some actual problems. Hearing everyone praise me, I was very pleased with myself. But a month later, Sister Xiang Zhen's arrival unexpectedly changed everything.

Xiang Zhen had been a church leader before, and fellowshiped clearly about the truth. She was a high-caliber person and a capable worker. She saw some issues and deviations in our work right after she came, and quickly found words of God to fellowship and resolve things. Gradually, I noticed the brothers and sisters would seek out Xiang Zhen for fellowship on their problems, and I started to feel annoyed. I thought to myself, "I'm the team leader, so if my fellowshiping about the truth and ability to solve problems aren't as good as Xiang Zhen, what will everyone think of me? Will they think I'm not a capable team leader, and can't resolve problems?" When I thought that way, I felt really humiliated and developed a bias against Xiang Zhen. I felt like she was showing off in pointing out the deviations in our work and resolving the brothers' and sisters' problems. I felt that she didn't respect me—the team leader—and intentionally embarrassed and humiliated me. I thought to myself, "Even though you

were a leader before and have some work experience, my caliber is not inferior to yours, and I believe I'm every bit as good as you." To save face, in gatherings I tried hard to ponder God's words, and wanted to fellowship better than her. When the brothers and sisters encountered problems and difficulties, I spent time finding God's words to fellowship and resolve them, and thought about how I could talk about some good experiences so the brothers and sisters could see who really had the truth reality.

Once, at a gathering, a sister brought up a difficulty she faced in doing her duty, and wanted to find out how to resolve it. I thought to myself: "I need to hurry up and find some relevant passages in God's word to resolve the sister's problem. This time, I definitely have to make up lost ground and outdo Xiang Zhen." But the faster I wanted to do so, the more confused I got. I flipped back and forth in the text, not knowing which passage of God's word would be suitable. In the end Xiang Zhen fellowshiped with her and resolved her problem. I felt so frustrated, and as my face burned with shame, I just wanted to find a hole and crawl in. The more I wanted to prove myself, the more I made a fool of myself. I felt like I could never compare to Xiang Zhen, no matter how hard I worked. I was really suffering and depressed, and felt that in trying to do my duty, I had lost face. I also felt that everyone had completely seen how I really measured up, and the brothers and sisters definitely saw Xiang Zhen as a more qualified team leader than me. That being the case, maybe I should have just resigned as soon as possible to at least save face. I knew that I shouldn't be jealous of Xiang Zhen, but I couldn't control it. I was suffering and negative, and didn't know how to escape the bonds of reputation and status. I even defined myself, and felt that since I had always pursued those things, maybe that was just my nature and I couldn't change it. I wanted to open up to the brothers and sisters and seek a resolution to my problem, but I was

afraid they would look down on me. I also didn't want to admit to the brothers and sisters that I wasn't as good as Xiang Zhen. So I was always negative, and developed a deeper and deeper bias against Xiang Zhen. When I saw how active she was in gatherings, I thought she was showing off, vying with me for status. The desire to ignore her got stronger and stronger. I even thought about opening up to another sister about my dissatisfaction, and getting her to take my side and judge Xiang Zhen. I was vaguely aware that by doing that, I was ganging up on Xiang Zhen. But I didn't reflect on myself. One evening, I told a sister how negative I was. At gatherings it was usually Xiang Zhen who suggested which words of God we should fellowship on, so I felt she didn't respect me. I felt constrained, and didn't even want to be a team leader anymore. I thought that sister would take my side, but instead, she advised me to treat Xiang Zhen properly, and reflect more on my own problems. In the following days, I saw that she was getting along well with Xiang Zhen, and it made me feel uncomfortable. I thought to myself: "I shared so much with you, so how can you not be biased against Xiang Zhen?" That kind of thought surprised me. "How could I even think that? Am I not trying to form a clique and exclude Xiang Zhen?" The more I thought, the more I became afraid, and started to reflect on myself. Then I remembered God's words: **"What kind of disposition is it when a person sees someone who is better than them and they try to bring them down, spreading rumors about them, or employing despicable means to denigrate them and undermine their reputation—even trampling all over them—in order to protect their own place in people's minds? This is not just arrogance and conceit, it is the disposition of Satan, it is a malicious disposition. That this person can attack and alienate people who are better and stronger than them is insidious and wicked. And that they will stop at nothing to bring**

people down shows that there is much of a devil in them! Living by the disposition of Satan, they are liable to belittle people, to try to stitch them up, to make things hard for them. Is this not evildoing? And living like this, they still think they're okay, that they're a good person—yet when they see someone better than them, they are liable to give them a hard time, to trample all over them. What is the issue here? Are people who are capable of committing such evil deeds not unscrupulous and willful? Such people only think of their own interests, they only consider their own feelings, and all they want is to achieve their own desires, ambitions, and aims. They don't care how much damage they cause to the work of the church, and they would prefer to sacrifice the interests of the house of God to protect their status in people's minds and their own reputation. Are people like this not arrogant and self-righteous, selfish and vile? Such people are not only arrogant and self-righteous, they are also extremely selfish and vile. They are not considerate of God's intentions at all. Do such people have God-fearing hearts? They do not have God-fearing hearts at all. This is why they act wantonly and do whatever they want, without any sense of blame, without any trepidation, without any apprehension or worry, and without considering the consequences” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. The Five Conditions That Must Be Met to Embark on the Right Track of Belief in God). When I previously read that passage of God's word, I never thought they applied to me. Then I finally saw that God's word revealed my own situation. I never imagined I could be so treacherous and malicious. Seeing Xiang Zhen fellowship about the truth better than me, and resolve the brothers' and sisters' actual problems, not only made me unhappy, but also resentful and envious of her. I felt that her superiority made me lose face. To save face and protect my status, I was constantly trying to think of ways



to outdo her. If I couldn't, that led to a bias against her, and I judged her as showing off and trying to steal my status. I was trying to form a clique behind her back, and spread bias against her so everyone would isolate her. I was really arrogant. I couldn't allow anyone to be better than me, and I would stop at nothing to hold on to my status as team leader. By doing that, was I any different from those antichrists who attacked and excluded others just for status? My understanding of the truth was shallow, and I couldn't resolve actual problems. But I wouldn't let Xiang Zhen fellowship and help everyone, so wasn't I harming the brothers and sisters? I had no humanity! When I realized that, I felt guilty. I had let the brothers and sisters down. Then I mustered up the courage to open up and fellowship about my competition with Xiang Zhen for reputation, and apologized to her. She said she could tell I wasn't very happy while she was fellowshipping during gatherings, so she felt constrained and didn't dare to share too much, afraid that it would impact me. That's when I realized my struggle for reputation had harmed her, and I felt guilty.

Thereafter I continued to seek the path of practice, and I read these words of God: **“As a church leader, you do not merely need to learn to use the truth to resolve problems, you also need to learn to discover and cultivate people of talent, whom you absolutely must not envy or suppress. Practicing in this way is beneficial to the work of the church. If you can cultivate a few pursuers of the truth to cooperate with you and do all the work well, and in the end, you all have experiential testimonies, then you are a qualified leader or worker. If you are able to handle everything according to the principles, then you are committing your loyalty. Some people always fear that others are better than they are or above them, that other people will be recognized while they get overlooked, and this leads them to attack and exclude others. Is this not**

**a case of being envious of people with talent? Is that not selfish and despicable? What kind of disposition is this? It is maliciousness! Those who only think about their own interests, who only satisfy their own selfish desires, without thinking about others or considering the interests of God's house, have a bad disposition, and God has no love for them. If you are truly capable of showing consideration for God's intentions, you will be able to treat other people fairly. If you recommend a good person and allow them to undergo training and perform a duty, thereby adding a person of talent to God's house, will that not make your work easier? Will you not then be showing loyalty in your duty? That is a good deed before God; it is the minimum conscience and reason that those who serve as leaders should possess. ... Do not always do things for your own sake and do not constantly consider your own interests; do not consider the interests of man, and give no thought to your own pride, reputation, and status. You must first consider the interests of God's house, and make them your priority. You should be considerate of God's intentions and begin by contemplating whether or not there have been impurities in the performance of your duty, whether you have been loyal, fulfilled your responsibilities, and given it your all, as well as whether or not you have been wholeheartedly thinking about your duty and the work of the church. You must consider these things. If you think about them frequently and figure them out, it will be easier for you to perform your duty well"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Freedom and Liberation Can Be Gained Only by Casting Off One's Corrupt Disposition). From God's word, I understood that leaders and workers have to learn how to identify and cultivate talented people. They cannot envy or suppress talented people to protect their own reputation and status, which God detests. Xiang Zhen

fellowshipped about the truth clearly, and could resolve actual problems. That benefited the church's work and helped the brothers and sisters enter into life. I had to be considerate of God's intentions and let go of my own reputation and status, work in harmony with Xiang Zhen, and do my duty well. Being selected as a team leader was God's grace, giving me a chance to practice. It didn't mean that I understood everything, or that I was qualified for that duty. My understanding of the truth was shallow, and my inability to see through problems was normal, so I should have learned from Xiang Zhen. But I always saw myself as the team leader, thinking that I should be able to see into and resolve every problem, and couldn't possibly be less capable than anyone else. So I was always struggling and competing with Xiang Zhen, and if I couldn't do better than her, I would become negative and suffer. I was so foolish! God has actually never demanded that leaders and workers be able to resolve every problem. God hopes that I will be honest, fellowship only about what I understand, and come together with the brothers and sisters to discuss whatever I don't understand. That is the practice that is in line with God's intention. After I understood God's intention, I stopped feeling so envious of Xiang Zhen, and was able to accept and implement any good ideas she had. When the brothers and sisters brought up their difficulties in gatherings, Xiang Zhen and I worked in tandem to fellowship and help them, and many problems were resolved.

After that experience I thought I had changed, and no longer paid so much attention to reputation and status. But I was so deeply corrupted by Satan that when I encountered the right situation, I returned to my old ways. In July of 2021, I was dismissed because I couldn't do actual work, and Xiang Zhen was elected as the new team leader. Faced with this outcome, I accepted that she really was better than me in every way, and electing her would benefit the brothers' and sisters' entry into life. But after a while I

saw that in doing her duty, Xiang Zhen took on a burden. When the brothers and sisters ran into difficulties and problems, she was able to fellowship with them and resolve their issues in a timely manner. She was also able to summarize deviations in our church life. That stirred up some feelings for me: “If Xiang Zhen is more effective than I was as a team leader, won’t that make me look even worse? What will everyone think of me? They will certainly think I lack ability and have low caliber.” Thinking that way at the time, I didn’t hope that church life would improve. During gatherings in the past, whether fellowshipping about knowledge of God’s word or summarizing issues in our work, I would always take the initiative to fellowship and inspire enthusiasm in everyone to do the same. But in gatherings during that period, I was always the last one to speak up. Sometimes when I gained a bit of enlightenment and light, I was unwilling to talk about it, and would reluctantly say a few words at the very end. When Xiang Zhen asked me to elaborate, I didn’t want to say anything more. At that time, the brothers and sisters were running into difficulties doing their duty and living in negative states, but Xiang Zhen was too busy with work to deal with issues right away. I not only didn’t offer help, but actually took pleasure in her plight, thinking: “See—you’re really not such a great team leader. You’re no better than I am!” I saw that the brothers’ and sisters’ problems weren’t being resolved immediately, and church life was ineffective. But I didn’t help Xiang Zhen, and even hoped that kind of situation would continue. Then I saw Xiang Zhen quickly adjusted her schedule and resolved those issues. That made me really unhappy again, and I envied her even more. Gradually, I began to dislike her more and more. It finally got to the point that I didn’t even want to hear anything she said or any point of view she expressed. During gatherings, I’d turn and look the other way when she was fellowshipping. I knew I was becoming

more and more envious, and that my disposition was malicious, which would both hurt her and impact church life. I didn't want that to continue, but I couldn't break free of my situation. In my pain, I prayed to God: "Oh God! I don't want to envy Xiang Zhen, but I can't help myself. Please save me so I can see through the dangers and consequences of pursuing reputation and status, and no longer be bound by my corrupt disposition." Thereafter, I openly shared my wrong state with the brothers and sisters. After hearing what I said, Xiang Zhen said she never imagined I would do that to her, and she was hurt. When she said that, I felt so guilty. We had known each other for so long, and I had often envied her and judged her behind her back, but she didn't argue with me. She forgave me, and fellowshipped on the truth to help me. I had absolutely no humanity and had been so malicious to treat her that way.

One time in a gathering, I read these words from God: **"Antichrists consider their own status and reputation as more important than anything else. These people are not only deceitful, cunning, and wicked, but also extremely vicious. What do they do when they detect that their status is at risk, or when they lose their place in people's hearts, when they lose these people's endorsement and affection, when people no longer venerate and look up to them, and they have fallen into ignominy? They suddenly change. As soon as they lose their status, they become unwilling to perform any duty, everything they do is perfunctory, and they have no interest in doing anything. But this isn't the worst manifestation. What is the worst manifestation? As soon as these people lose their status, and no one looks up to them, and no one is misled by them, out comes the hate, jealousy, and revenge. They not only have no God-fearing hearts, but also lack any shred of submission. In their hearts, furthermore, they are liable to hate God's house, the**

**church, and the leaders and workers; they long for the work of the church to run into problems or come to a standstill; they want to laugh at the church, and at the brothers and sisters. They also hate anyone who pursues the truth and fears God. They attack and mock anyone who is loyal in their duty and willing to pay a price. This is the disposition of the antichrists—and is it not vicious? These are clearly evil people; antichrists are in their essence evil people”** (The Word, Vol. 4.

Exposing Antichrists. Item Nine (Part Two)). God exposes the deceit, wickedness, and malevolent nature of antichrists. As soon as they lose their status or others' support, they become envious and vengeful. Not only do they just muddle through in doing their duty, but also hope that there are errors in the church's work so they can ridicule God's house and the brothers and sisters. God's words revealed my situation. After being dismissed, I could see that Xiang Zhen bore a burden in doing her duty, and that she could actively resolve the brothers' and sisters' problems. I was afraid that if she did a good job and church life improved, that would show I wasn't as good as her. To protect my status and image in the hearts of the brothers and sisters, I was hoping that church life would be ineffective. So even if I clearly had enlightenment and light, I wasn't willing to fellowship about them. If Xiang Zhen couldn't resolve the brothers' and sisters' problems promptly because she was busy with work, I didn't help. Instead, I took pleasure in her plight, waiting to laugh at her. I envied her because at work, she was more capable than I was. I didn't like anything about her, and totally rejected her. I was expressing the malevolent disposition of an antichrist! The effectiveness of church life is directly related to the life entry of the brothers and sisters, and they can only do their duty well when their situation is normal and they have entered into life. But to maintain my status in peoples' eyes, I not only failed to support church life, but hoped that the brothers' and sisters'

problems would go unresolved, and that they would be ineffective in doing their duty. I was so treacherous and malicious! Whether God's house promotes or dismisses someone is based on work requirements. I couldn't do my job, so I was dismissed, and then a more suitable person took it on. Not only did I not work well with Xiang Zhen, I even undermined her behind the scenes. I caused disruption and disturbance, and I hurt her. Was I even human? At that thought, I was filled with regret, and couldn't stop the tears from flowing. I hated myself for being so malicious, and didn't deserve to live before God. I remembered that the Bible said: "Envy is the rottenness of the bones" (Proverbs 14:30). That is so true. Envy can make people hate, and even do unreasonable things.

That night, I read another passage of God's word: **"If you always disturb, disrupt, and undermine things that God wants to defend, if you always show contempt toward such things, and always have notions and opinions about them, then you are naysaying God and standing against Him. If you don't regard the work of God's house and the interests of God's house as important, and always want to undermine them, and always want to cause destruction, or always want to profit from them, cheat, or embezzle, then will God be angry with you? (Yes.) What are the consequences of God's anger? (We will be punished.) This is for certain. God will not forgive you, absolutely not! Because what you are doing is tearing down and destroying the church's work, and this is in conflict with the work and interests of God's house. This is a great evil, it is entering into a rivalry with God, and it is something that directly offends God's disposition. How can God not be angry with you? If some people, because they are of poor caliber, aren't competent in their work and unintentionally do things that cause disruption and disturbance, this is excusable. However, if**

**due to your own personal interests you engage in jealousy and strife and intentionally do things that disrupt, disturb, and destroy the work of God's house, this counts as a deliberate violation, and this is a matter of offending God's disposition. Will God forgive you? God is doing the work of His 6,000-year management plan, and all of His painstaking effort goes into it. If someone opposes God, deliberately harms the interests of God's house, and deliberately pursues their personal interests and their personal prestige and status at the expense of harming the interests of God's house, and doesn't hesitate to tear down the church's work, causing the work of God's house to be obstructed and destroyed, and even doing tremendous material and financial damage to God's house, do you think that such people should be forgiven? (No, they shouldn't.)"** (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Nine (Part One)). From God's word, I realized that His disposition does not tolerate offenses. To maintain my status with everyone, I opposed Xiang Zhen without rhyme or reason, always hoping she would be humiliated, which impacted the church's work. I was willing to sacrifice the church's interests as the cost of achieving my own aims. This is resisting God. I thought about how God has paid such a great price to save mankind, hoping that humanity can gain the truth, change their life dispositions, and receive God's salvation. Only when the brothers and sisters have a good church life and good people as leaders can they understand the truth, enter into the truth reality, and receive God's salvation. But I wasn't considerate of God's intentions at all. When I saw that church life was ineffective, I was surprisingly happy, and even hoped that situation would continue. How could I have been so contemptible and malicious? The devil Satan hopes God's work to save mankind fails, and the work of God's house is paralyzed. It hopes that the brothers and sisters lose God's salvation, and



finally descend to hell with it and are destroyed. Didn't the fact that I could think and act that way today mean that I was the same as the devil Satan in disrupting and disturbing the work of the church? God's righteous disposition does not tolerate offenses, and if I continued on that path and failed to repent, I would certainly do even greater evil, offend God's disposition, and be spurned, and eliminated by Him. That was when I really knew in my heart that pursuing name and status is not a good path. I remembered what God's words say: **"Satan uses fame and gain to control man's thoughts, until all people can think of is fame and gain. They struggle for fame and gain, suffer hardships for fame and gain, endure humiliation for fame and gain, sacrifice everything they have for fame and gain, and they will make any judgment or decision for the sake of fame and gain. In this way, Satan binds people with invisible shackles, and they have neither the strength nor the courage to throw them off. They unknowingly bear these shackles and trudge ever onward with great difficulty. For the sake of this fame and gain, mankind shuns God and betrays Him and becomes increasingly wicked. In this way, therefore, one generation after another is destroyed in the midst of Satan's fame and gain"** (The Word, Vol. 2. On Knowing God. God Himself, the Unique VI). Before, I hadn't taken my pursuit of fame and status seriously. I had always felt I just wanted others to think highly of me, and would never harm the brothers and sisters or jeopardize the interests of the church. But at that point, the revelation of God's word and the facts showed that things are not as simple as I thought. Reputation and status are tools that Satan uses to hurt and harm people, shackles that Satan put on that controlled me, so I would rebel against and resist God at any time. If I didn't pursue the truth and accept God's judgment and chastisement, but kept chasing after those things, I would be ruined. Since ancient times, the pursuit of status and

power has caused good friends to become enemies, and close relatives to become calculating and cruel to each other. I treated Xiang Zhen the same way. To preserve my reputation and status, I could never tolerate her. I vied with her both openly and in secret, and when I couldn't outperform her, I would form cliques behind her back to judge her. When I saw that church life was producing poor results, I didn't try to maintain it. I took a detached view, wanting to see Xiang Zhen fail so I could laugh at her. I was even willing to see the work of the church suffer to satisfy my desire for status. I saw that to walk the path of pursuing reputation and status is to oppose God. I was afraid, and knew that if I didn't repent and kept pursuing reputation and status, disrupting and disturbing the work of the church, I could become an antichrist and be expelled from the church, losing my chance to be saved. I was so grateful to God once I saw that. In spite of myself, I was always chasing reputation and status. That time God was setting up a real situation so I could see the ugliness of my vying for those things, and I finally understood from personal experience the suffering and dangerous consequences of pursuing reputation and status. Through the judgment and revelation of God's words, I also realized that His righteous disposition does not tolerate offenses, and in my heart, I wanted to break the bondage of reputation and status. I wanted to repent and change. Before, I had always felt negative and weak, because I thought my desire for reputation and status was too serious to change, and I didn't have the confidence to pursue the truth. At that point, I understood that even though I was corrupt, as long as I was willing to pursue the truth and change, God would guide me to understand the truth, cast off the shackles of reputation and status, and embark on the path to salvation.

Later, I read this in God's word: **“Do not always think about surpassing everyone, doing everything better than others, and standing**

out from the crowd in every way. What kind of disposition is that? (An arrogant disposition.) People always possess an arrogant disposition, and even if they want to strive for the truth and satisfy God, they fall short. Being controlled by an arrogant disposition makes people the most liable to go astray. For example, there are some people who always want to show off by expressing their good intentions in place of God's requirements. Would God approve of that kind of expression of good intentions? To be considerate of God's intentions, you must follow God's requirements, and to perform your duty, you must submit to God's arrangements. People who express good intentions are not considerate of God's intentions, but are instead always trying to play out new tricks and speaking lofty-sounding words. God does not ask that you be mindful in this way. Some people say that this is them being competitive. In and of itself, being competitive is something negative. It is a revelation—a manifestation—of the arrogant disposition of Satan. When you have a disposition like that, you are always trying to keep others down, always trying to get ahead of them, always jockeying, always trying to take from people. You are highly envious, you don't yield to anyone, and you are always trying to distinguish yourself from the crowd. This spells trouble; this is how Satan acts. If you truly wish to be an acceptable created being, then do not pursue your own dreams. Trying to be superior and more capable than you are in order to achieve your aims is bad. You should learn to submit to God's orchestrations and arrangements, and you should stand fast in the place that a human being should occupy; only this is a demonstration of reason” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. The Principles That Should Guide One's Conduct). “What are your principles for conducting yourselves? You should conduct yourselves according to your station,

**find the right place for you, and perform the duty that you ought to; only this is someone with reason. By way of example, there are people who are adept at certain professional skills and have a grasp of principles, and they should take on the responsibility and make the final checks in that area; there are people who can provide ideas and insights, inspiring others and helping them to perform their duties better—then they should provide ideas. If you can find the right place for you and work in harmony with your brothers and sisters, you will be fulfilling your duty, and you will be conducting yourself according to your station”** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. The Principles That Should Guide One’s Conduct). From God’s word, I found paths of practice. God grants different gifts and caliber to each person. He hopes that we will submit to His sovereignty and arrangements, and give full play to our skills in our own position. Xiang Zhen has a higher caliber than me, and can resolve actual problems. The work benefits from having her as team leader, and that’s a good thing. I haven’t entered into life very deeply, so I should work hard to improve, and do my best to do my duty well. That was the sense I should have had. I was always afraid people would say that I’m incompetent and low-caliber. This was because my nature was too arrogant, and I didn’t understand myself, or adopt the correct position. Xiang Zhen was focused on entering into life, and had love for the brothers and sisters. When she saw my problems, she was able to give advice and help me. I should treasure the chance to work with her, learn from her strengths, and focus on my own entry into life in the environment that God provided. Practicing that way would benefit my entry into life. With that kind of mindset, I gained a sense of freedom. After that, I no longer envied Xiang Zhen. In gatherings, I could actively fellowship and cooperate with her, fellowship about what I understood, and do my utmost to help the brothers

and sisters. After practicing that way, I had a sense of peace and ease that I never felt before.

Going through that experience helped give me a better understanding of my corrupt nature. I saw that I was so deeply corrupted by Satan that I would stop at nothing to protect my reputation and status, and was truly sinister and malicious. When I was fighting for status and envied other people's abilities, it was really painful. It was the judgment and revelation of God's word that made me clearly see the essence of pursuing reputation and status, releasing me from the bonds of envy, so I could be more relaxed and free. I thank God from the bottom of my heart!

## 21. Unmasking My “Spiritual Parent”

By Alyssa, South Korea

I was a believer in the Lord Jesus for 11 years and before only went to gatherings at Pastor Ben’s church. Pastor Ben was a really well-known preacher in our area. He was pious and kind, served the Lord for many years, and knew the Bible well. He conducted all of the church’s biblical training, so I really admired him. I’d go ask him every time there was something I didn’t understand. He’d pray for us any time our family faced difficulties. Unwittingly, I came to see him as a spiritual father in my faith.

In 2017, I heard Almighty God’s gospel of the last days, and in Almighty God’s words, I saw that He reveals the mysteries of God’s 6,000-year management plan to save mankind, the inside story of God’s three stages of work, the mysteries of God’s incarnations, how Satan corrupts people, how God works step by step to save humanity, how God sorts each according to their kind, how He determines our outcome and destination, and what kind of pursuit we should have to achieve salvation and enter the kingdom. All these truths and mysteries were things I’d never heard after all my years as a Christian. It was really a feast for the eyes! I became certain in my heart that Almighty God is the Lord Jesus returned and I also brought my two children before God. I thought of Pastor Ben, who’d been a preacher for so many years. He was always telling us to watch and wait, not to miss our chance to be raptured by the Lord. If he knew that the Lord had returned, he’d certainly accept it happily. I decided to equip myself with the truth as fast as I could so I could share the gospel with him. But before long, Pastor Ben came to seek me out first.

That day, he visited our family’s fruit stand and asked me, smiling, “Deacon Alyssa, it’s been a while. I heard you’re attending another church,

and I thought you were going to a bigger one. I was surprised that you're going to The Church of Almighty God. That church testifies that the Lord Jesus has returned in the flesh. That's impossible! This is heresy, and your faith is mistaken. Return to the Lord and repent right away." I was stunned to hear him say this. I thought, "You don't know anything about that church and haven't looked into Almighty God's work of the last days. How can you casually condemn it?" But then I thought, "I guess he hasn't heard Almighty God's words so he won't know it's the true way. He has served the Lord for years and is longing for His coming. If he reads Almighty God's words and sees they're all the truth, he'll certainly accept it." So, I bore witness to him about God's work of the last days. I said, "Pastor Ben, you just said the Lord can't possibly return in the flesh. Is this based on the Lord's words?" He confidently replied, "It says in Matthew 24:30, **'And then shall appear the sign of the Son of man in heaven: and then shall all the tribes of the earth mourn, and they shall see the Son of man coming in the clouds of heaven with power and great glory.'** The Lord Jesus clearly said that when He returns He will openly appear with great glory on a cloud for everyone to behold. So, it's not possible that the Lord will return in incarnate form. I dare say, any preaching that the Lord is coming in the flesh is a false way, it's heresy. I'll never believe in it!" I hastily responded, "Pastor, there are many prophecies in the Bible about the Lord's return. There are prophecies of the Lord coming on a cloud, but there are also many about the Lord coming in secret, such as, **'If therefore you shall not watch, I will come on you as a thief'** (Revelation 3:3), **'Behold, I come as a thief'** (Revelation 16:15), **'And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom comes; go you out to meet him'** (Matthew 25:6). The Lord Jesus also said: **'For as the lightning, that lightens out of the one part under heaven, shines to the other part under heaven; so**

**shall also the Son of man be in His day. But first must He suffer many things, and be rejected of this generation'** (Luke 17:24–25). **'As the lightning comes out of the east, and shines even to the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be'** (Matthew 24:27). These verses mention the Lord returning **'as a thief,'** and **'the coming of the Son of man.'** Would a thief coming to steal treasure come openly, with a grand spectacle? Of course not. They'd sneak in at night and most people wouldn't know. So the Lord coming as a thief refers to Him coming in secret, and that is God coming in the flesh as the Son of man. If you insist only on the Lord coming openly on a cloud, how will the prophecies of His coming in secret as a thief be fulfilled? If the Lord came on a cloud, everyone would see Him. Would anyone need to shout **'The bridegroom comes; go you out to meet him'**? So based on the Lord's prophecies we can be sure that His return will be in two stages. First He comes in secret in the flesh, then He appears openly. This way these prophecies of the Lord's coming correspond." Pastor Ben had an awkward look on his face as I told him this. I went on, "Pastor, Almighty God expresses all truths to cleanse and save mankind, does the work of judgment beginning with God's house, and has already made a group of overcomers. The work of God's secret incarnation is about to come to an end, then He'll unleash the great disasters, reward the good and punish the wicked, appearing openly to all peoples. At that time, all who resist and condemn Almighty God will fall into the disasters, weeping and gnashing their teeth. This fulfills Revelation 1:7 that says: **'Behold, He comes with clouds; and every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him.'**" Hearing this, Pastor Ben just gave me a scornful look and said, "You don't know much about the Bible, but you're preaching to me?" I was so disappointed to see that was his attitude. Was this the Pastor



Ben I'd known? I'd always thought he was a humble man. He often told us to be the wise virgins and keep watch to welcome the Lord's coming. How could he have no desire to seek and investigate news of the Lord's return? I advised him, "Pastor, is having lots of Bible knowledge the same as knowing God? Does it guarantee someone won't resist God? The Jewish Pharisees knew the Scriptures by heart and thought that they knew God. But when the Lord Jesus appeared and worked, they saw His words had power and authority, but they didn't seek or investigate it. They clung to the literal Scriptures, and insisted that He wasn't God if He wasn't called Messiah. They even blasphemed Him, saying He drove out demons by relying on Beelzebub. They condemned and resisted the Lord Jesus' work based on their notions and finally had Him crucified. They offended God's disposition and incurred His punishment and curses. Pastor Ben, we must learn a lesson from the Pharisees' failure." He was left speechless for a moment, then said in a huff, "Since you've been an ardent seeker all these years in your faith, I'll pray for you. Leave The Church of Almighty God right away!" He then stalked off.

After he'd gone, I thought that based on his attitude toward the Lord's coming, it didn't seem like he truly longed for it. Why wouldn't he listen to Almighty God's word, look into it, and then come to a conclusion? All those years, he'd been a believer, making sacrifices, expending himself, and working hard. It would be such a shame if he missed his chance to be raptured. I decided to wait for another chance, and talk to him again about God's work of the last days. He'd probably accept it once the fellowship was clear. A couple days later, Pastor Ben showed up at our fruit stand again. I thought he must've studied the Bible and come to understand how the Lord returns, and he was ready to investigate it. To my surprise, he said, "Deacon Alyssa, last time you said the Lord first comes secretly in the

flesh, and then openly appears. I disagree. The Bible says: ‘You men of Galilee, why stand you gazing up into heaven? This same Jesus, which is taken up from you into heaven, shall so come in like manner as you have seen Him go into heaven’ (Acts 1:11). The Lord Jesus went up to heaven on a white cloud in the form of a Jewish man, so He will return on a white cloud in the form of a Jewish man. You’ve been misled. You must turn back.” Pastor Ben went on and on like this, apparently determined to convince me. Seeing him stubbornly clinging to the idea of the Lord returning on a cloud, judging and condemning Almighty God’s work, I didn’t really understand. There are so many biblical prophecies about the Lord’s return in the flesh, in secret. Why wasn’t he seeking or investigating it at all? How should I fellowship with him? I said a silent prayer, asking God for His guidance. Just then, a passage of Almighty God’s words came to mind. I read it to Pastor Ben. Almighty God says: **“Many people may not care what I say, but I still want to tell every so-called saint who follows Jesus that, when you see Jesus descend from the heaven upon a white cloud with your own eyes, this will be the public appearance of the Sun of righteousness. Perhaps that will be a time of great excitement for you, yet you should know that the time when you witness Jesus descend from the heaven is also the time when you go down to hell to be punished. That will be the time of the end of God’s management plan and it will be when God rewards the good and punishes the evil. For the judgment of God will have ended before man sees signs, when there is only the expression of truth. Those who accept the truth and do not seek signs, and thus have been purified, shall have returned before the throne of God and entered the Creator’s embrace. Only those who persist in the belief that ‘The Jesus who does not ride upon a white cloud is a false christ’ shall be subjected to everlasting punishment, for**

**they only believe in the Jesus who exhibits signs, but do not acknowledge the Jesus who proclaims severe judgment and releases the true way and life. And so it can only be that Jesus deals with them when He openly returns upon a white cloud. They are too stubborn, too confident in themselves, too arrogant. How could such degenerates be rewarded by Jesus? The return of Jesus is a great salvation for those who are capable of accepting the truth, but for those who are unable to accept the truth it is a sign of condemnation. You should choose your own path, and should not blaspheme against the Holy Spirit and reject the truth. You should not be an ignorant and arrogant person, but someone who submits to the guidance of the Holy Spirit and longs for and seeks the truth; only in this way will you benefit”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The

Appearance and Work of God. By the Time You Behold the Spiritual Body of Jesus, God Will Have Made Heaven and Earth Anew). Reading this, I was thinking that God’s words are so clear. Pastor Ben should understand now. But the moment I was done, before I could say anything, he said, looking grim, “No matter what, I only believe the Lord Jesus will come on a cloud. That can’t be wrong! I’m a pastor and have served the Lord for many years. Could you really know more than me? Besides, all the clergy in the religious world condemn The Church of Almighty God. That means Almighty God can’t possibly be the Lord Jesus returned. I suggest you turn back immediately!” Seeing him so obstinate without any intention of seeking was worrying, I said, “Pastor Ben, do the clergy of the religious world represent God? Is every view of the religious world the truth? When the Lord Jesus came to work, He was madly condemned and opposed by the entire Jewish religion. Can you say that His work wasn’t the true way? To welcome the Lord, we have to focus on listening for His voice, not blindly following religious trends. You should listen to Almighty God’s words and see if it’s the truth, if it’s the

voice of God....” But he interrupted me before I finished, and said in a dismissive tone, “I read Almighty God’s words ages ago. I don’t think they are the voice of God, and you shouldn’t read them anymore.” I was disgusted by his look of contempt. I thought, “Almighty God has expressed so many truths surpassing everything God said in the Age of Law and Age of Grace. Also, all His words are so authoritative—one can tell right away it’s God’s voice. Surprisingly, Pastor Ben just doesn’t get it. Is he actually one of God’s sheep?”

Pastor Ben kept coming to talk to me from time to time over the next couple of weeks, telling me to leave The Church of Almighty God. One day, he stormed angrily over to the fruit stand and didn’t address me as Deacon Alyssa like before, but just said right away in a commanding tone, “You’re not to believe in Almighty God anymore or bring your two kids into it! You particularly can’t preach this to the church’s brothers and sisters. Otherwise, I’ll make an announcement that you now believe in heresy, and I’ll expel you. I’ll make everyone shun and reject you!” I was really angry. I was thinking that accepting the true way was my own freedom, and he had no right to stop me. We believers have all been hoping for the Lord’s return and now I should share the wonderful news that I’d welcomed the Lord with the others. Why did he keep standing in my way? Justly and sternly, I said to him, “God’s sheep hear His voice and no one can stop that. My kids have read Almighty God’s words, have recognized God’s voice and want to follow Him. This is their freedom. On what grounds are you trying to restrict their freedom of belief?” He was speechless for a moment, then cursed me out in a rage and stormed off. A while later, I preached Almighty God’s gospel of the last days to two sisters from my old church. They were happy to hear Almighty God’s words and contacted me regularly. Before too long, Pastor Ben found out about it,

misled and held them back. They stopped contacting me and began avoiding me. I was so upset and angry. I couldn't help thinking of what the Lord Jesus said to the Pharisees: **“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for you neither go in yourselves, neither suffer you them that are entering to go in”** (Matthew 23:13). Pastor Ben didn't seek and look into God's work of the last days and did all he could to stop others from looking into it and welcoming the Lord. Wasn't that ruining people's chance to get into the kingdom? How was that any different from what the Pharisees did? I just couldn't make any sense of it. Pastor Ben was a long-time believer who seemed devout and was waiting for the Lord's return. Why wouldn't he seek at all when he heard news of the Lord's coming, but resisted and condemned it?

Later, at a gathering, I told my brothers and sisters what had happened. They read two passages of Almighty God's words and then I could see the root of the problem. Almighty God says: **“Do you wish to know the root of why the Pharisees opposed Jesus? Do you wish to know the essence of the Pharisees? They were full of fantasies about the Messiah. What is more, they believed only that the Messiah would come, yet did not pursue the life truth. And so, even today they still await the Messiah, for they have no knowledge of the way of life, and do not know what the way of truth is. How, say you, could such foolish, stubborn and ignorant people gain God's blessing? How could they behold the Messiah? They opposed Jesus because they did not know the direction of the Holy Spirit's work, because they did not know the way of truth spoken by Jesus, and, furthermore, because they did not understand the Messiah. And since they had never seen the Messiah and had never been in the company of the Messiah, they made the mistake of clinging**

**to the mere name of the Messiah while opposing the essence of the Messiah by any means possible. These Pharisees in essence were stubborn, arrogant, and did not obey the truth. The principle of their belief in God was: No matter how profound Your preaching, no matter how high Your authority, You are not Christ unless You are called the Messiah. Is this belief not preposterous and ridiculous?”** (The Word, Vol. 1.

The Appearance and Work of God. By the Time You Behold the Spiritual Body of Jesus, God Will Have Made Heaven and Earth Anew).

**“There are those who read the Bible in grand churches and recite it all day long, yet not one among them understands the purpose of God’s work. Not one among them is able to know God; still less can any one among them accord with God’s intentions. They are all worthless, vile people, each standing on high to lecture God. They willfully oppose God even as they carry His banner. Claiming faith in God, still they eat the flesh and drink the blood of man. All such people are devils that devour the soul of man, head demons that deliberately disturb those trying to step onto the right path, and stumbling blocks impeding those who seek God. They may appear of ‘sound constitution,’ but how are their followers to know that they are none other than antichrists who lead people to stand against God? How are their followers to know that they are living devils dedicated to the devouring of human souls?”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The

Appearance and Work of God. All People Who Do Not Know God Are People Who Oppose God).

Almighty God’s words were enlightening for me. Why do the pastors and elders so strongly resist and condemn God’s work of the last days? It’s mainly because they’re so stubborn and arrogant by nature. They not only don’t accept the truth, but they even despise it. It’s just like the Jewish Pharisees who always expounded on the Scriptures in the synagogues. But when the Lord Jesus came and worked, though they knew His words had

authority and power, they still refused to look into them. They rigidly clung to the literal Scriptures and used the Old Testament law to condemn Him. To protect their status and living, they even made up rumors and bore false witness to frame the Lord Jesus and had Him nailed to the cross in the end. I saw that Pastor Ben was just like that. He knew Almighty God is expressing lots of truths and doing judgment work, and not only did he not look into it, but he madly resisted and condemned it. He clung to the words of the Bible and to his own notions and imaginings. He believed that if it's not the Lord Jesus coming on a cloud, it's not God's appearance and work. He spread all kinds of heresies to keep believers from looking into the true way. He kept the believers firmly under his own control. The more I thought about it, the scarier it seemed. What kind of pastor was that? How was that being the Lord's servant? He was a modern-day Pharisee, a living demon keeping people out of the kingdom! Almighty God's work in the last days exposes the hypocritical faces of these pastors and elders. They're not true believers at all, nor are they waiting to welcome the Lord's appearance. They believe in the Lord Jesus in name only, just those three words "the Lord Jesus," but they don't know His divine essence at all, and they really don't believe that He's the way, the truth, and the life. That's why they never submit to the truth or seek when they hear the way of the truth. They even hate and condemn Christ who expresses the truth. They are the Pharisees, the antichrists exposed by God's work of the last days. Before I didn't understand the truth and I lacked discernment, so I was misled by the clergy's devout presentation, and I even saw them as my spiritual parents. I was so blind! Thank Almighty God for letting me see their true hypocritical colors, and their antichrist essence of hating the truth and opposing God. I was finally free of the misleading and bonds of the Pharisees and antichrists

of the religious world and I returned before God's throne. Thank Almighty God for His salvation!



## 22. An Evaluation That Exposed Me

By Caitlyn, USA

In mid-May 2021, a church leader suddenly came to talk to me and asked me if I knew much about Sister Lilah, if she was fair toward others, and if she was ever judgmental. She looked so stern that I asked her right away what was going on. She said that Lilah had a really arrogant disposition and had said judgmental things about several leaders in front of the brothers and sisters, saying they were false leaders. She also said that Lilah was a smooth talker, and in gatherings she went on about her self-knowledge, but didn't actually understand herself at all. She said most of the brothers and sisters couldn't see Lilah for what she was, and that they liked her fellowship. I immediately thought of how some of the antichrists who'd been kicked out of the church had done the same thing, judging leaders and workers. It's one thing to say one leader here or there is false, but saying several of them are false is arrogant. At the time, I said, "The fact that she can say these things is a serious matter. Aren't the judgments she makes the same as those antichrists make?" I also remembered how at the leaders' election last year, Lilah was secretly discussing one of the candidates with another sister, saying the candidate cared too much about face and status, did things just for show, and didn't do any real work. I couldn't help but start to feel biased against Lilah and thought she really was judgmental.

Then, the leader urged me to write an evaluation of Lilah. I thought back to my recent interactions with her, when some brothers and sisters called her out for some things. Although she was defensive at first, she later reflected on and knew herself, had some change and entry, and was able to accept the truth. In conversations with her, I could see she cared about self-

reflection and self-knowledge, and that she prayed, sought the truth principles, and looked up God's words to enter in. I felt she was a seeker of the truth. But when I thought about how the leader said Lilah had an arrogant disposition, was a smooth talker, good at misleading people, and was now casually judging leaders and workers, if I said in my evaluation that she was someone who could accept and pursue the truth, would the leader say I lacked discernment and was a fool? If I left the leader with a bad impression, she might not let me perform certain duties in the future. With that in mind, I said in my evaluation that Lilah had an arrogant disposition, and would sometimes judge people according to her own imagination. I said that she struggled to accept the truth, and tended to make justifications for herself when people confronted her with problems. I also mentioned some of the corruptions she occasionally revealed in daily life. Although I wrote some of the ways she pursued the truth, too, I added a comment saying I wasn't sure if she was really a truth seeker. I felt a little uneasy after writing the evaluation; I never felt that Lilah was how the leader described. Although she did have an arrogant disposition and sometimes spoke in a way that was blunt and hard to take, she wasn't bad at heart. She upheld the interests of the church when problems arose, and was brave enough to speak up when she saw others violating the truth principles. For example, when she saw that a sister was always muddling through her duty and impacting the progress of work, Lilah was able to put their relationship aside and help her by pointing it out without delay, while also telling the leader about it. If one looked at Lilah's overall behavior, she was able to uphold the interests of the church and was a right person, but the leader said otherwise. I wondered if the leader was biased, and if the evaluations she was gathering would get Lilah dismissed or cleansed away from the church. I felt more uneasy the more I thought about it, so I asked

the leader if she had fellowshiped with Lilah about her problems, and how she had understood them. But the leader evaded the question, saying Lilah had been prone to judge leaders and workers before, and was now doing it again. She said one leader was thinking of resigning because of Lilah's accusations, so she had already become a disruption. Hearing this, I figured the leader must be better at understanding problems than I was, and that I must be lacking in discernment and had been taken in by Lilah's outward behavior. So I didn't say anything else.

A couple days later, an upper leader looked into the situation and said Lilah wasn't arbitrarily judging leaders and workers, but was exposing and reporting false leaders with a sense of justice. That leader had been reported by Lilah, so she was oppressing and punishing her, saying Lilah was arbitrarily judging leaders and workers—she even unilaterally halted Lilah's duty! The false leaders who Lilah reported had all been dismissed, and she was given back her duty. My heart skipped a beat when I heard this—I was shocked, and also felt kind of unsettled. I'd gone along with the leader in saying that Lilah had an arrogant disposition, arbitrarily judging leaders, and not accepting the truth well. Wasn't I also condemning Lilah? This was a serious problem! I felt like it was no small matter, and that I should really reflect on and know myself. So I prayed to God, asking Him to guide me to understand myself. Later, I read this in God's words: **“To believe in God and walk the right path in life, at the very least you must live with dignity and human likeness, you must be worthy of people's trust and be regarded as valuable, people must feel that there is substance to your character and integrity, that you follow through with everything that you say, and keep to your word. ... People with dignity all have a bit of personality, they sometimes don't get along with others, but they are honest, and there is no falseness or trickery to them.**

**Others ultimately hold them in high esteem, because they are able to practice the truth, they are honest, they have dignity, integrity, and character, they never take advantage of others, they help people when they're in trouble, they treat people with conscience and reason, and never make snap judgments about them. When assessing or discussing other people, everything these individuals say is accurate, they say what they know and don't run their mouths about what they don't, they don't embellish, and their words can serve as evidence or reference. When they speak and act, people who possess integrity are relatively practical and trustworthy. No one regards people who lack integrity as valuable, no one pays any attention to what they say and do, or treats their words and actions as important, and no one trusts them. This is because they tell too many lies and speak too few honest words, it is because they lack sincerity when they interact with people or do anything for them, they try to trick and fool everyone, and no one likes them. Have you found anyone who, in your eyes, is trustworthy? Do you think yourselves worthy of other people's trust? Can other people trust you? If someone asks you about another person's situation, you should not appraise and judge that person according to your own will, your words must be objective, accurate, and in line with the facts. You should speak about whatever you do understand, and not talk about things that you lack insight into. You must be just and fair toward that person. That is the responsible way to act. If you have only observed a surface-level phenomenon, and what you want to say is just your own judgment about that person, then you must not blindly pass a verdict on that person, and you certainly must not judge them. You must preface what you say with, 'This is just my own judgment,' or 'This is just how I feel.' That way, your words will be relatively**

**objective, and after hearing what you said, the other person will be able to sense the honesty of your words and your fair attitude, and they will be able to trust you. Are you sure that you can accomplish this?"** (The

Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Only an Honest Person Can Live Out True Human Likeness). I realized from God's words that upright, honest people assess others correctly and objectively, and don't just shoot their mouths off. They say just what they know, and no more. They can be trusted. But those who aren't upright have personal intents in their assessments, spouting off whatever they imagine, even distorting facts, or turning things upside down to achieve their own aims. That sort of person lies too much, tells too little truth, and can't be trusted. They lack dignity and integrity. I rethought my assessment of Lilah. When I heard the leader condemn her as arrogant, self-righteous, and judgmental, I made no effort to discern whether or not this was factual, and did not investigate whether the leaders Lilah reported were false leaders. I just blindly went along with the leader in condemning her. Although I realized that the leader's opinion of Lilah didn't fit with my experience, and I felt unsettled, I was afraid she would say I was a fool who lacked discernment and would have a bad impression of me, and that I might not be given important duties. That's why I wrote a negative assessment of Lilah. I was going against the facts, incriminating her, and oppressing her; I was revealing a malicious disposition. It was upright of Lilah to report and expose false leaders without being constrained by status and power. I not only failed to support her, but joined a false leader in condemning her, bringing her nothing but pain. This was doing evil, and I was acting as Satan's helper. Realizing this, I was full of regret and self-blame. I felt deeply indebted to Lilah and I couldn't bring myself to face her. I prayed to God, "God, I lack humanity. I followed a

false leader, and oppressed and condemned Lilah. I've committed a transgression before You. God, I was wrong and want to repent."

I read a couple more passages of God's words that helped me understand myself better. Almighty God says: **"The antichrists are blind to God, He has no place in their hearts. When they encounter Christ, they treat Him no different from an ordinary person, constantly taking their cues from His expression and tone, changing their tune as befits the situation, never saying what's really going on, never saying anything sincere, only speaking empty words and doctrine, trying to deceive and hoodwink the practical God standing before their eyes. They don't have a God-fearing heart at all. They aren't even capable of speaking to God from the heart, of saying anything real. They talk as a snake slithers, the course sinuous and indirect. The manner and direction of their words are like a melon vine climbing its way up a pole. For example, when you say someone is of good caliber and could be promoted, they immediately talk about how good they are, and what is manifested and revealed in them; and if you say someone is bad, they are quick to talk about how bad and evil they are, about how they cause disturbances and disruptions in the church. When you inquire about some actual situations, they have nothing to say; they prevaricate, waiting for you to make a conclusion, listening out for the meaning in your words, so as to align their words with your thoughts. Everything they say is pleasant-sounding words, flattery, and obsequiousness; not a sincere word comes out of their mouths"** (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Ten: They Despise the Truth, Brazenly Flout Principles, and Ignore the Arrangements of God's House (Part Two)). **"The humanity of antichrists is dishonest, which means they are not truthful in the least. Everything they say and do is adulterated and contains their own intentions and**

goals, and hidden in it all are their unmentionable and unspeakable tricks and schemes. So the words and actions of antichrists are too contaminated and too full of falsity. No matter how much they speak, it's impossible to know which of their words are true, which are false, which are right, and which are wrong. This is because they are dishonest, and their minds are extremely complicated, full of treacherous schemes and rife with tricks. None of what they say is straightforward. They do not say one is one, two is two, yes is yes, and no is no. Instead, in all matters, they beat around the bush and think things through several times in their minds, working out the consequences, weighing the merits and drawbacks from every angle. Then, they alter what they want to say using language so that everything they say sounds quite unwieldy. Honest people never understand what they say and are easily deceived and tricked by them, and whoever speaks and communicates with such people finds the experience tiring and laborious. They never say one is one and two is two, they never say what they are thinking, and they never describe things as they are. Everything they say is unfathomable, and the goals and intentions of their actions are very complicated. If the truth gets out—if other people see through them, and catch on to them—they quickly concoct another lie to get around it. ... The principle and method by which these people comport themselves and deal with the world is tricking people with lies. They are two-faced and speak to suit their audience; they perform whatever role the situation demands. They are smooth and slick, their mouths are filled with lies, and they are untrustworthy. Whoever is in contact with them for a while is misled or disturbed and cannot receive provision, help, or edification”

(The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Excursus Four: Summarizing the Character of Antichrists

and Their Disposition Essence (Part One)). God's words reveal that antichrists always harbor tricks in their words and actions; they speak in a roundabout way, deceiving others, and lack any credibility. Even when they are in contact with Christ, they're looking for clues in His words, seeing which way the wind blows, and being a sycophant. There's nothing genuine about them. They are really slippery, deceitful, and evil. I'd never been in direct contact with Christ, but I did listen for signs, read the room, and guess at what others wanted. I was showing an antichrist's disposition. A few months earlier, the leader had asked for my assessment of Lilah. At the time, I didn't hear the leader's negative opinion of her; I thought she probably wanted to promote her. So, I said that Lilah could seek and accept the truth in the face of problems, that she had a sense of justice, and could uphold the church's interests. I basically wrote only about her strengths, hardly mentioning her weaknesses. But this time when I heard the leader said she was not a right person and that she was asking for others' evaluations of Lilah, I knew I had a different experience of Lilah than she did. However, in order that the leader would say I had discernment, I went along with her, and said Lilah had an arrogant disposition, was judgmental, and struggled to accept the truth when things happened. In both evaluations I was assessing the same person, but said totally different things. I wasn't being remotely fair or objective. I thought about the Lord Jesus' words: **"Let your communication be, Yes, yes; No, no"** (Matthew 5:37). However, when I was writing about Lilah, I wanted to give the leader a good impression, so I tried to guess what she wanted to hear. I had to run things through in my head several times before voicing an opinion, complicating my thoughts. Everything I said and did was tainted with personal intents; not a word of it was genuine or true. I was being far too deceitful and evil. I was unprincipled in my words and actions, and didn't deserve the trust of God



or other people. I'd entirely lost my dignity and integrity. I felt more and more disgusted with myself. Before, when I'd seen false leaders and antichrists oppressing and condemning others in order to protect their own name and status, I was indignant. I never imagined I'd do the same kind of evil. I twisted the facts just to achieve my own aims and protect my own interests. I misrepresented a person with a sense of justice who protected the interests of the church as a judgmental one. I was incriminating and wronging a good person. I stood on the side of a false leader, condemning and oppressing Lilah.

Once during a gathering, a sister said she'd heard the leader wanted to collect evaluations of Lilah, but felt Lilah wasn't quite like the leader portrayed her. This sister didn't blindly listen to the leader; instead, she had discernment over what the leader said and did. She also told the upper leaders about it and put a stop to that treatment of Lilah. When faced with the same situation as me, this sister could seek the truth; she had a God-fearing heart, and her words were honest and fair. She protected Lilah and upheld the interests of the church, whereas I bought into the false leader's lies and tricks, and encouraged her unbridled evil, acting like Satan's minion. I really hated myself for this. I reflected on why I gave in so easily when the leader said those things about Lilah. It was because I didn't fully understand the truth about what being judgmental is. In fact, the key to knowing if someone is judgmental, is to look at the intent behind their words, and if the problems they report are factual. If one discovers false leaders who go against the principles and don't do real work, and then fellowships and discerns with brothers and sisters who understand the truth, if the intent of that person is to uphold the church's interests, then they are not being judgmental, but rather, having a sense of justice. Those who are actually judgmental have their own intent; they distort facts and turn things

upside down; they slander and attack people; they find things to hold over others, or they make a big deal of the corruption people display, and indiscriminately label them. All they bring upon others is oppression and condemnation. That's what it means to be judgmental. I didn't have a pure understanding of what it meant to be judgmental; therefore, I fallaciously believed that if we discover problems with a leader or worker, we should tell them directly or report it to an upper leader, and that if we discuss their problems with other brothers and sisters behind their back, then that's being judgmental. I wasn't looking at the context or the essence of the situation. When I heard that Lilah had spoken with some sisters in private, saying certain leaders weren't doing real work and that they were false leaders, I thought she was being judgmental, so I arbitrarily condemned her. I gave no thought to whether what she said reflected reality. But now the facts showed that what she reported was true. She dared to speak the truth and protect the interests of the church. She had a sense of justice, and was not judgmental.

I learned some lessons from this failure of mine. In future evaluations, I must have a God-fearing heart, and not blindly trust others. I have to discern the essence of things according to the facts and God's words. If I don't understand the truth and can't see things clearly, I have to at least be forthright, not butter someone up and distort things. God's words say: **“When I say ‘following the way of God,’ what does the ‘way of God’ refer to? It means fearing God and shunning evil. And what is fearing God and shunning evil? When you give your appraisal of someone, for example—this relates to fearing God and shunning evil. How do you appraise them? (We must be honest, just, and fair, and our words must not be based on our feelings.) When you say exactly what you think, and exactly what you have seen, you are being honest. First of all, the practice of being honest aligns with following the way of God. This is**

**what God teaches people; this is the way of God. What is the way of God? Fearing God and shunning evil. Is being honest not part of fearing God and shunning evil? And is it not following the way of God? (Yes, it is.) If you are not honest, then what you have seen and what you think is not the same as what comes out of your mouth. Someone asks you, ‘What is your opinion of that person? Is he responsible in the church’s work?’ and you reply, ‘He’s great. He is more responsible than I am, his caliber is better than mine, and his humanity is good, too. He is mature and stable.’ But is this what you are thinking in your heart? What you actually see is that although this person does have caliber, he is unreliable, rather deceitful, and very calculating. This is what you’re really thinking in your mind, but when the time comes to speak, it occurs to you that, ‘I can’t tell the truth. I mustn’t offend anyone,’ so you quickly say something else, and choose nice things to say about him, but nothing you say is what you really think; it is all lies and all fake. Does this indicate that you follow the way of God? No. You have taken the way of Satan, the way of demons. What is the way of God? It is the truth, it is the basis according to which people should comport themselves, and it is the way of fearing God and shunning evil. Although you are speaking to another person, God is also listening; He is watching your heart, and scrutinizing it. People listen to what you say, but God scrutinizes your heart. Are people capable of scrutinizing the hearts of man? At best, people can see that you are not telling the truth; they can see what’s on the surface, but only God can see into the depths of your heart. Only God can see what you are thinking, what you are planning, and what little schemes, treacherous ways, and active thoughts you have within your heart. When God sees that you are not telling the truth, what is His opinion and evaluation of you? That you**

**have not followed God's way in this matter because you did not tell the truth"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Part Three). I realized from God's words that everything that happens boils down to whether we are able to fear God and shun evil. God sees into our hearts and minds. God sees absolutely everything we think and do. When we evaluate others, we should have a God-fearing heart. We should not be controlled by personal intent or interest, but rather, be factual, say only what we know, and be honest in accordance with God's requirements. If we do not have a clear understanding of someone's behavior, or of the truth principles which apply to the situation, we should seek and pray more, so we don't arbitrarily judge or label someone. I also thought of the work of cleansing the church. Having personal intents, and failing to evaluate people objectively and in accordance with the facts, could mislead others. In serious cases, someone could be cleared out or expelled in error, thereby wronging them. Speaking and acting based on feelings, shielding and protecting a disbeliever or an evil person, could mean someone who should be cleared out or expelled is kept in the church where they can cause further disruption. It is the same with changes in duty. If an evaluation is inaccurate, it could prevent good people from being promoted and cultivated, while bad people retain their positions. This not only holds up the life entry of brothers and sisters, but it disrupts and disturbs the work of the church. Besides this, I realized that assessments need to be based on overall behavior; they need to be fair and objective. We can't just fixate on people's weaknesses or a momentary display of corruption, blowing it out of proportion and slapping a label on them. After realizing this, I started reminding myself that in the future I had to have a God-fearing heart when evaluating other people, and to do it factually, fairly, and objectively. Later, I had to write another evaluation of Lilah for reasons of duty. I knew that this was a test, to see if I could

practice the truth, enter into the principles, and assess my sister in a fair and objective way. So, I quieted my heart before God and said a prayer, asking God to look into my heart. I wanted to be honest. I had to call a spade a spade, and not speak from my own intent. I had to write down what I knew, and if I didn't know something, say so. I felt so much better when I put this into practice.

That evaluation of Lilah helped me see my own sly and deceitful corrupt disposition, and that if I speak and act from my own intent, I will unwittingly do evil and hurt people. I also saw that living by God's words and the truth, speaking and acting truthfully the way God teaches us to, and being an honest person, is the only way to live out a true human likeness and gain God's approval.

## **23. A Duty Can't Bear Fruit Without the Principles**

By Shu Qin, China

In 2021, I was elected as a leader. Due to work requirements, I took responsibility at another church later. Noticing that the church's work wasn't very effective, I thought, "The leaders who arranged for me to come to this church must value me highly and hope I can turn the work of this church around, so I have to do well and make the leaders see I can do some actual work." Next, I went to each group at the church to learn about the work situation and resolve the difficulties and problems of brothers and sisters in their duties. Some brothers and sisters were in a bad state, so I lovingly helped and supported them. When I found unsuitable people in jobs, I discussed with the brothers and sisters I was partnered with and quickly transferred or replaced them according to principles. After some time, the work of the church had improved somewhat. I was very happy, and I couldn't help thinking, "It seems I can do some actual work. I have to keep working hard and produce better results so my brothers and sisters see I have the ability to work and say I am a good leader."

One day, while we went over some work, I noticed that the effectiveness of watering work had significantly declined. Several newcomers weren't coming to gatherings. I thought, "All the other work is more effective now, but the effectiveness of watering work has declined. I can't let watering work affect the overall results, or everyone will say I'm an incapable leader, and won't look at me in the same way again." So, I quickly went to the watering staff to look into it. I learned then that the group leader, Sister Wu Wen, didn't consider newcomers' real difficulties when she arranged their gatherings and duties. She arranged gatherings

when some newcomers had to work, so they were unable to attend. Hearing this made me feel a little angry. I thought, “I clearly told her we need to consider newcomers’ situations when we arrange gatherings and duties for them. Why can’t she understand things thoroughly and apply things flexibly? It seems that she doesn’t have the caliber to water newcomers. She is the group leader, and if she deviates in her practice, it will affect the effectiveness of the whole group. She needs to be dismissed immediately. If I don’t dismiss her, the work results will never improve. Not only will it hinder the church’s work, but my superiors, brothers, and sisters will think I’m incapable of work or resolving actual problems. I can’t have people questioning my competence.” So, I raised Wu Wen’s dismissal with my co-workers. The watering deacon said, “Wu Wen was effective at watering newcomers in the past. She could be in a bad state recently, and might have been a little too hasty when training the newcomers, which led to problems. We should learn about her situation and then fellowship and help her. If she doesn’t change after some time passes, we can dismiss her then.” But I didn’t listen at all. I just thought, “Wu Wen didn’t just start watering newcomers. I’ve also reminded her of this before. I think she doesn’t accept reminders and help. If we don’t dismiss her promptly, and there is a delay or work is impacted, I’m the one who’ll be held responsible. No matter what, this time I need to make them agree with me and dismiss Wu Wen.” So, I said angrily, “Wu Wen is ineffective in her duty—this proves that she is incompetent and unsuitable for this duty. If you keep her, and the results of our work don’t improve, which of you can bear that responsibility? You can help her without me!” When they saw my attitude, my co-workers didn’t say anything.

Later, I heard Wu Wen was very negative after being replaced. She felt we’d dismissed her based on momentary behavior, rather than a balanced

evaluation of her consistent behavior, and that this kind of dismissal was inconsistent with principles. Yet not only did I not seek the truth and reflect on myself, I felt Wu Wen's stature was too small, and that she couldn't know herself or learn lessons from things, so I didn't take it seriously at all.

After Wu Wen was dismissed, we chose Sister Zhen Xin as the group leader. I happily thought, "Now watering work should be more effective." But after some time, I found that Zhen Xin's ability to work was rather poor, and she wasn't as responsible as Wu Wen. She couldn't grasp newcomers' states in time, and she didn't know how to fellowship to solve their problems. As a result, after some time, the watering work still didn't improve. I started to feel uneasy, and wondered if dismissing Wu Wen had been a mistake. With things at this point, however, I decided to fellowship and give further help to Zhen Xin, to see if her results could be improved.

As more newcomers came to the church, the top priority was to train more watering staff quickly. So I quickly began looking for candidates. I thought of Sister Chen Chen, who had recently been dismissed. She had preached the gospel before and had produced some results. She was friendly and good at communicating with people, so if we trained her, the watering work would improve, and my superiors would definitely say I had good caliber and was competent. So, I asked the watering deacon to focus on cultivating Chen Chen. The watering deacon said, "We thought of arranging things like that, but we saw that Chen Chen still had no self-knowledge after she was dismissed. When she was preaching the gospel, she had always competed for fame and gain, and seeded jealousy and disputes, making it impossible for others to perform their duties normally. If we train her to water newcomers now, won't she just do more wickedness and cause more disruptions? Watering is one of the most important tasks—those trained for it must have good humanity and must not disrupt the



church's work. We have to do things according to principle!" Her words made me anxious. I thought, "Chen Chen is friendly and has caliber. Training her to water newcomers is certain to quickly make work more effective. If we decide not to train her now because she seems to lack genuine repentance, my leaders won't be able to see my work ability. That's no good. I have to convince them to do what I want. I can't just give in." So, I said to the watering deacon, "Is now the time to be blindly following rules? The principles also say those who transgressed in the past should be given the opportunity to repent. Chen Chen is friendly and has the caliber to water newcomers, so we can train her. We just need to watch her closely and not let her cause disturbances. Chen Chen has good caliber and learns quickly. Having one more skilled waterer will solve many problems for the church!" When the watering deacon saw my stubborn attitude, she didn't say anything more.

But a few days later, the watering deacon reported that Chen Chen didn't learn about the notions and confusion of newcomers before watering them and didn't offer targeted fellowship and solutions. Instead, she insisted on fellowshiping based on her own ideas. This had caused two newcomers to become opposed, resistant, and stop believing. I felt a little uneasy—with Chen Chen's caliber, she shouldn't have done such a thing. Later, when I spoke to Chen Chen, I realized that she was only outwardly proactive in her duties. She had no understanding of her past transgressions, and after such a major problem occurred in her watering work, she didn't reflect on herself and learn a lesson from it. She was numb. Only now did I have some awareness that maybe I had been too hasty in cultivating her, and maybe she needed to continue to reflect. But on second thought, Chen Chen had good caliber and had been a leader, so if I helped her more, she should be able to quickly understand herself and turn things around. All I had to do

was train her and improve the results of watering work, and my leaders would approve of me.

Just as I was expecting good results, my partnered sister said to me one morning, “The brothers and sisters have written to say that you haven’t been performing your duty according to principles. You forcibly arranged Chen Chen, who was still in isolation and reflection, to do watering work. During this time, Chen Chen has had many problems when watering newcomers, and she hasn’t reflected or shown awareness of herself at all. Looking at her consistent behavior, she is completely unsuitable for cultivation, and they recommend that she continue to self-isolate and reflect.” When I heard what she said, my heart skipped a beat. “It’s over. This isn’t just simple feedback—this is reporting me and exposing me for not doing my duty according to principles. I have believed in God for years, and I’ve never been reported by anyone. What will my brothers and sisters think of me now?” At the time, I was very embarrassed. I picked up my cup and drank a few gulps of water, trying to calm myself, but my heart was as turbulent as a stormy sea: “If my leaders find out about the contents of that letter, they will surely say I don’t do my duty in line with principles, and that I am disrupting church work. Will they dismiss me over this?” My mind was in turmoil. In the end, I slumped into my chair like a deflated ball. When my partner saw my state, she said, “Being monitored and exposed by our brothers and sisters is helpful for us. You should accept it from God.” I promised to accept it from God, but I couldn’t calm my mind. The whole day, I couldn’t eat or sleep. The thought of how the facts of my behavior were exposed in this letter pierced my heart. I fell to my knees and prayed to God, “God! I know You have goodwill in letting this happen to me. Please guide me in understanding Your intention and learning lessons from it.”

As I reflected and sought, I gained some knowledge of my state through reading God's words. Almighty God says: **"No matter what it is they're doing, antichrists always have their own aims and intentions, they are always acting according to their own plan, and their attitude toward the arrangements and work of the house of God is, 'You may have a thousand plans, but I have one rule'; this is all determined by the nature of antichrists. Can antichrists change their mentality and act according to the truth principles? That would be absolutely impossible.... No matter what duty antichrists perform, they always stick to the same principle: They must make some gain in terms of reputation, status, or their interests, and they must not incur any losses. The kind of work antichrists like most is when they don't have to suffer or pay any price, and there is a benefit to their reputation and status. In sum, no matter what they're doing, antichrists first consider their own interests, and they only act once they've thought it all out; they do not truly, sincerely, and absolutely submit to the truth without compromise, but do so selectively and conditionally. What condition is this? It is that their status and reputation must be safeguarded, and must not suffer any loss. Only after this condition is satisfied will they decide and choose what to do. That is, antichrists give serious consideration to how to treat the truth principles, God's commissions, and the work of God's house, or how to deal with the things they face. They do not consider how to satisfy God's intentions, how to keep from damaging the interests of God's house, how to satisfy God, or how to benefit the brothers and sisters; these are not the things they consider. What do antichrists consider? Whether their own status and reputation will be affected, and whether their prestige will be lowered. If doing something according to the truth principles benefits the work of the**

**church and the brothers and sisters, but would cause their own reputation to suffer and cause many people to realize their true stature and know what sort of nature essence they have, then they will definitely not act in accordance with the truth principles. If doing some real work will cause more people to think highly of them, look up to them and admire them, allow them to gain even greater prestige, or enable their words to carry authority and make more people submit to them, then they will choose to do it that way; otherwise, they will never choose to disregard their own interests out of consideration for the interests of God's house or of the brothers and sisters. This is the nature essence of antichrists"** (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Nine (Part Three)). From what was revealed in God's word, I understood that everything antichrists do is to protect their own reputation and status. In matters that don't involve their reputation and status, they can act by the truth principles, but if acting by the truth principles threatens their reputation and status, antichrists will blatantly violate principles and act arbitrarily according to their own ideas. They would prefer to harm the church's interests to safeguard their own. I reflected on all I'd done since becoming a leader, and saw it was the same as the antichrists' behavior revealed by God's word. I'd always wanted to achieve something quickly, to prove I was competent and could do actual work—in this way, my superiors, brothers, and sisters would see making me a leader was the right choice. So, when I selected and used people, I didn't seek the truth principles at all, I didn't think about how to benefit the church's work, I didn't listen to others' advice, and I insisted on deciding by myself. When I'd seen that Wu Wen wasn't arranging gatherings and duties reasonably for newcomers based on their actual situations, I hadn't asked about her state and difficulties, nor had I worked with her to find the root of the problems and enter into principles so that she

could avoid making the same mistakes. Seeing that she produced no results in her duty, and how that would damage my reputation and status, I had unfairly labeled her, excluded her, and had wanted to dismiss her. To protect my reputation and status, I'd ignored principles and the advice of my co-workers and forcibly removed her. I'd shown no love or patience for her, and hadn't fellowshiped on the truth to help her. I had just directly dismissed her. I was truly lacking in humanity! After dismissing her, the new sister I had selected couldn't do the work, which directly impacted the results of the watering work. Even then, I didn't reflect on myself. For quick improvement in the results of the work, and to have the leaders' approval, I'd violated principles again—promoting and cultivating someone who'd disturbed the church's work. I'd even taken things out of context, and absurdly said we should give her a chance to repent. I'd criticized the watering deacon for blindly following rules, making her afraid to refute me. The result was that Chen Chen wasn't suitable at all, and had harmed the watering work. I saw that for the sake of my own reputation and status, I pursued quick success in my duty, and ignored the principles of God's house and the reminders of others. Even after being reported and exposed, I didn't reflect on the reasons for my failures—what I worried about was how the leaders saw me. I stubbornly protected my reputation and status, and would rather let the church's interests suffer to safeguard my own. What I displayed was the disposition of an antichrist!

Later, I read another passage of God's word that gave me some insight into the nature of my actions. God says: **"If someone says they love the truth and that they pursue the truth, but in essence, the goal they pursue is to distinguish themselves, to show off, to make people think highly of them, to achieve their own interests, and the performing of their duty is not to submit to or satisfy God, and instead is to achieve**

fame, gain, and status, then their pursuit is illegitimate. That being the case, when it comes to the work of the church, are their actions an obstacle, or do they help move it forward? They are clearly an obstacle; they do not move it forward. Some people wave the banner of doing the work of the church yet pursue their own personal fame, gain, and status, run their own operation, create their own little group, their own little kingdom—is this kind of person doing their duty? All the work they do essentially disrupts, disturbs, and impairs the work of the church. What is the consequence of their pursuit of fame, gain, and status? First, this affects how God’s chosen people eat and drink God’s word normally and understand the truth, it hinders their life entry, stops them from entering the right track of faith in God, and leads them onto the wrong path—which harms the chosen ones, and brings them to ruin. And what does it ultimately do to the work of the church? **It is disturbance, impairment, and dismantlement**” (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Nine (Part One)). After reading God’s word, I understood that when we pursue personal reputation and status under the banner of doing our duty, we are in essence acting as Satan’s servants and disrupting the church’s work. God’s word revealed the essence of my actions. God has shown grace to me in giving me the opportunity to be a church leader, and He hoped I would be considerate of His intentions and water my brothers and sisters well, solve their difficulties and problems in life entry, and train suitable people to do the various work of the church and ensure church work proceeds normally. But I didn’t consider God’s intentions and requirements, and I didn’t fulfill my responsibilities as a leader. When I selected and used people, I only considered my own interests. As a result, the waterer I had promoted and cultivated wasn’t suitable for the work. Not only were newcomers poorly watered, but the watering work was also

hindered, causing the newcomers to become negative and withdraw. How was this performing my duty? I was disrupting the church's work, and I was doing evil! Even like this, I had no awareness—I was too selfish and too numb! I thought of the antichrists and wicked people who were expelled from the church. They were always plotting for their own benefit, they ignored the truth principles to maintain their reputation and status, they did their duties arbitrarily and wantonly, seriously disturbed the church's work, and finally, because of their many wicked deeds, they were detested and eliminated by God. Was there any difference in substance between what I did and the deeds of these antichrists? When I recognized this, I was terrified, and I prayed to God, “God, I was negligent in my duty. I pursued fame, status, and quick success, and I took the wrong path. God, I wish to repent to You. Please lead and guide me.”

Later, through reflection and seeking, I realized that to be effective in our duty, we must have the right intentions, focus on seeking the truth, and act according to principles. Only then can we receive God's guidance, and continuously improve in our results. As God says: **“When you receive a commission from God and aim to fulfill your duty and complete your mission, you must first understand God's intention. You need to know that this commission comes from God, that it's His intention, and you should accept it, be considerate of it, and, more importantly, submit to it. Secondly, you should seek out which truths you need to understand to perform this duty, which principles you should follow, and how to practice in a way that benefits God's chosen people and the work of God's house. These are the principles of practice. After understanding God's intention, you should promptly seek and understand the truths related to performing this duty and, after understanding the truth, ascertain the principles and path of practicing these truths. What do**

**‘principles’ refer to? Specifically, a principle refers to something upon which achieving a target or producing results must be based when practicing the truth. ... One must grasp the principles in order to practice the truth: Principles are the key, the most basic element. Once you’ve grasped the fundamental principles of performing your duty, it shows that you understand the required standards for performing that duty. Mastering these principles is equivalent to knowing how to practice the truth. So, on what basis is this ability to practice established? It is on the foundation of understanding God’s intention and the truth. Is it considered understanding the truth if you only know a sentence of what God requires? No, it isn’t. What standards must be met to be considered understanding the truth? You must understand the meaning and value of performing your duty and, once you have been clear about these two aspects, you have understood the truth of performing your duty. Furthermore, after understanding the truth, you must also grasp the principles of performing your duty and the paths of practice. Once you can grasp and apply the principles of performing your duty, and sometimes apply a little wisdom, you can ensure the effectiveness of performing your duty. By grasping these principles and acting according to them, you can be up to practicing the truth. If you perform your duty without mingling any human intentions, if it is done by absolutely submitting to God’s requirements and according to the work arrangements of God’s house, fully aligning with God’s words, then you have fulfilled your duty in a fully qualified manner, and even if there might be some discrepancies in the results compared to God’s requirements, this still counts as achieving God’s requirements. If you perform your duty fully in accordance with the principles, if you are loyal, all to the best of your ability, then your performance of duty**



**completely aligns with God's intention. You have fulfilled your duty as a created being with all your heart, mind, and strength, which is the result achieved by practicing the truth"** (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists.

Item One: They Try to Win Over People's Hearts). God's words are very clear. When we accept God's commission, we must first seek God's intentions, seek the principles we should enter in our duty, reach an understanding of the truth, submit to God, and strictly follow the truth principles in our duty. In addition, when doing our duty, we must consider the church's interests, examine ourselves often, and not scheme for personal gain. This reduces the adulteration of our own ideas, and the errors we make in our duties. I thought of how I had been acting solely for fame and status in my duty—I seldom sought the truth principles, and even when I knew a little, I didn't obey. In choosing watering staff, the key qualities needed are to fellowship the truth clearly, have patience, and be responsible. Wu Wen was responsible in her duty, and was loving and patient with newcomers. No matter what states or difficulties newcomers had, she could actively fellowship and solve problems. She had also grasped some of the principles of watering newcomers. In the past, she had been effective in her duty, and she'd only made some mistakes recently due to some actual difficulties she couldn't handle. In this situation, I should have offered fellowship and help out of love—either that, or pruned, exposed, and rebuked her—rather than just carelessly dismissing her. Also, when I'd seen that Chen Chen was enthusiastic and friendly on the outside, I'd imagined that she was suitable for cultivation. Now I realized this wasn't in line with principles. Those who are isolated for self-reflection can be assigned to spread the gospel and water newcomers if they don't cause disruption or interruptions, but people with bad humanity who do evil and disturb the church's work cannot be cultivated whatsoever. Chen Chen's desire for name and status was strong,

and she had often fought for them in the past, disturbing the church's work. After being dismissed and isolated to self-reflect, she never showed any genuine understanding of her past transgressions. Such people cannot be important targets for cultivation. I had violated principle by promoting and cultivating Chen Chen, causing delays to the watering work. I didn't understand the principles of dismissing and using people, and had been working for fame and status. This had disrupted and hindered the church's work, and had harmed the life entry of my brothers and sisters. Thinking about this, I was filled with regret. Later, I read a passage of God's word: **"In God's house, no matter what you do, you are not working on your own enterprise; it is the work of God's house, it is God's work. You must constantly bear this knowledge and awareness in mind and say, 'This is not my own affair; I am doing my duty and fulfilling my responsibility. I am doing the church's work. This is a task God entrusted to me and I am doing it for Him. This is my duty, not my own private affair.' This is the first thing people should understand. If you treat a duty as your own personal affairs, and do not seek the truth principles when you act, and carry it out according to your own motives, views, and agenda, then you will very likely make mistakes. So how should you act if you make a very clear distinction between your duty and your own personal affairs, and are aware that this is a duty? (Seek what God asks, and seek principles.) That's right. If something happens to you and you don't understand the truth, and you have some idea but things still aren't clear to you, then you must find brothers and sisters who understand the truth to fellowship with; this is seeking the truth, and before all else, this is the attitude you should have toward your duty. You shouldn't decide things based on what you think is appropriate, and then slam the gavel down and say case closed—this**

**easily leads to problems. A duty is not your own personal affair; whether major or minor, matters of God's house are no one's personal affair. As long as it relates to duty, then it is not your private matter, it is not your personal affair—it concerns the truth, and it concerns principle. So what is the first thing you should do? You should seek the truth, and seek the principles. And if you do not understand the truth, you must first seek the principles; if you already understand the truth, identifying the principles will be easy”** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. What Is the Adequate Performance of Duty?). God's word gave me a path of practice. Duties are commissions from God, not personal affairs, so we can't do them however we like to satisfy our personal interests. In everything, we must seek the truth principles and practice according to God's requirements. If we don't understand, we should fellowship and seek more with others. No matter what others think, all we need to do is accept God's scrutiny and do our best. Even if there are sometimes deviations or errors in our work, and we don't achieve good results quickly, but if we work to satisfy God, and not for others to see, we are walking the right path, and God will guide us. Later, I opened up about myself to my brothers and sisters, exposing how I had been doing my duty for reputation and status, my desire for quick success, my violations of principle in selecting and using people, as well as how I had acted arbitrarily and used my position to scold others, which caused them harm. I solemnly apologized to them and asked them to monitor me more. When I practiced like this, my brothers and sisters didn't look down on me, they encouraged me, and said we could supervise each other and work together to perform our duties well.

Before long, something else happened. The gospel deacon was temporarily unable to do her duty due to obstruction by her family. After I heard the news, I was a little anxious. I thought, “Now, every church is

doing all it can to preach the gospel—at this point, if the gospel deacon can't perform her duty, our work will be greatly affected! If I don't replace her in time, our results will never improve. My superiors will definitely think I'm incompetent." So, I discussed with my partnered sister whether to transfer the gospel deacon and find someone to take her place. She said, "The gospel deacon has always been responsible and a capable worker, and the results of gospel work have been good. If you transfer her just because she can't break free from the shackles of her family for a while, that would go against principles." Just when I was about to argue my case, I immediately thought about how I had forcibly replaced Wu Wen. Wasn't I acting to protect my reputation and status again? My partner was reminding me that I should perform my duty according to principles. I had nearly made another major mistake. As I thanked God in my heart, I said to her, "My intentions are wrong. I would be transferring her without principles, and working for fame and status again. She is indeed responsible, and is a correct person. If she can't do her work right now, then we'll pick up the slack and do the gospel work. Let's also learn more about her situation and try to support and help her." After hearing me, my partner nodded in agreement, and I felt at ease practicing this way.

Now, when I do my duty, I often ask myself, "Have I performed my duty today according to the truth principles? Did I do things with a corrupt disposition in my interactions with people?" If I do something not in line with principles and God's intentions, I pray to God to promptly rectify it. When I practice like this, I see God's guidance, church work improves a little, and my brothers and sisters can actively perform their duties. Thank God!

## 24. After Everyone but Me Was Promoted

By Martha, Italy

In January 2021, the project I was responsible for was about to wrap up. My brothers and sisters were gradually transferred to other duties, until just a few partners and I were left to finish things up. At the time, I thought that although there wasn't much work to do, I needed to complete it conscientiously. Surprisingly, one day, I learned that one of my partners had been promoted to be responsible for gospel work. This made me unsettled, and I felt sour about it. "Why haven't I been promoted? Couldn't I also be a supervisor?" But then I thought, "Maybe the leaders think she's a more capable worker, and that's why she's been promoted first. Anyway, my work here still isn't finished—once the work is done, new duties will likely be arranged for us." But before long, several other partners were also gradually promoted to be supervisors, and some of them even went on to be elected as leaders. Hearing this news made me even more uncomfortable. "They have all become leaders, workers or supervisors, but I haven't moved at all. I even have to take over everything they were working on, and it looks like I'll be responsible for all of it until the very end. We've all been doing the same work, so why are they all promoted instead of me? Am I really that bad? Now, I am the worst of all of them. Do my leaders think I am not worth cultivating? Do they have some prejudice against me? I really don't want to take on their work—the more I take on, the less I'll be able to do other kinds of work. By the time I finish this work, my partners will already be familiar with their work and have mastered some principles. If I am later sent to preach the gospel or water newcomers, and my former partner becomes my supervisor, such a large gap will be very embarrassing!" The more I thought about it, the more aggrieved I felt.

When my brothers and sisters asked me to take over their tasks, I was very opposed. I had pent-up anger inside me and didn't want to do that. For over two days, I didn't try to learn how to do the tasks they handed off to me. I didn't care much about my own work, either—I procrastinated with following up on work, and I didn't think about which problems needed to be solved or how to do things well. The work therefore progressed very slowly. Although I knew I should submit to the arrangements of the church, I felt listless, gloomy, and despondent. I was always unmotivated to do my duty. I became aware that my state was incorrect, so I came before God to pray, asking for His enlightenment and illumination, so that I might come to know myself.

After I prayed, I read a passage of God's words that gave me some knowledge of my state. God's words say: **“Right now, all of you perform your duties full-time. You are not constrained or tied down by family, marriage, or wealth. You have already emerged from those things. However, the notions, imaginings, knowledge, and personal intents and desires that fill your head remain completely intact. So, when it comes to anything that involves reputation, status, or an opportunity to shine—when you hear that the house of God plans to nurture various kinds of talented individuals, for example—every one of your hearts leaps in anticipation, each of you always wants to make a name for yourself and to step into the spotlight. You all want to fight for status and reputation. You are ashamed of this, but you would feel bad if you don't do so. You feel envy, hatred, and make complaints whenever you see someone stand out, and think that it is unfair: ‘Why can't I stand out? Why do other people always get the spotlight? Why is it never my turn?’ And after you feel resentment, you try to repress it, but you cannot. You pray to God and feel better for a while, but when you**

**encounter this sort of situation again, you still cannot overcome it. Is this not a manifestation of an immature stature? When people are caught in such states, have they not fallen into Satan's trap? These are the shackles of Satan's corrupt nature that bind humans. ... the more you struggle, the darker your heart will become, and the more envy and hatred you will feel, and your desire to obtain these things will only grow stronger. The stronger your desire to obtain them, the less you will be able to obtain them, and as this happens, your hatred will increase. As your hatred increases, you will grow darker inside. The darker you are inside, the worse your performance of your duty will become, and the worse your performance of your duty becomes, the less useful you will be to the house of God. This is an interlinked, vicious cycle. If you never perform your duty well, you will gradually be eliminated"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Freedom and Liberation Can Be Gained Only by Casting Off One's Corrupt Disposition). God's word exposed my state. I felt so resistant and unwilling during those days because my desire for status hadn't been satisfied. When I saw my partners being promoted, my heart was stirred. I hoped I could also be promoted, so that I could gain status and people's high regard. When I knew my leaders didn't mean to promote me, and made me take over my partners' work, I was jealous, and I suspected the leaders were prejudiced against me, or even looked down on me. When I thought of how I was the worst in the eyes of my leaders, and that several of my partners had been promoted to be leaders or supervisors while I had no position at all, I was miserable and defiant. I even vented my anger on my duty. I didn't show any concern toward the tasks I'd been given and didn't put my heart into my own work. God was truly disgusted to see me living in this rebellious state! I recalled how before, I had vowed to do my duty well; now, as soon as I saw others being

promoted, and my desire for status wasn't satisfied, I became negative and lost interest in my duty. My desire for status was too strong! I had to quickly seek the truth to resolve my state.

After that, I read some of God's words on how to view promotion and cultivation, and they enabled me to turn my state around. God's words say: **"If you think yourself fit to be a leader, possessed of the talent, caliber, and humanity for leadership, yet God's house has not promoted you and the brothers and sisters have not elected you, how should you treat the matter? There is a path of practice here that you can follow. You must thoroughly know yourself. Look to see if what it boils down to is that you have a problem with your humanity, or that the revelation of some aspect of your corrupt disposition repulses people; or whether it is that you do not possess the truth reality and are unconvincing to others, or that the performance of your duty is not up to standard. You must reflect on all these things and see where it is, exactly, that you fall short. After you have reflected for a while and found where your problem is, you must promptly seek the truth to resolve it, and enter the truth reality, and strive to achieve a change and to grow, so that when those around you see it, they will say, 'These days, he's been much better than before. He works solidly and takes his profession seriously, and he's especially focused on the truth principles. He doesn't do things impetuously or perfunctorily, and he's more conscientious and responsible about his work. He used to like talking big now and then, and constantly flaunted himself, but now he's much more low-key and no longer overbearing. Even if he is able to do a few things, he doesn't boast about it, and when he's finished something, he repeatedly reflects on it, for fear of doing something wrong. He acts much more cautiously than before, and with a God-fearing heart—and most of all,**



he can fellowship about the truth to resolve a few problems. Indeed, he's grown.' Those around you who have interacted with you for a while find that you have undergone obvious change and growth; in your human life, self-conduct and handling of matters, and in your attitude toward your work, and in your treatment of the truth principles alike, you exert more effort than before, and are rigorous in your speech and acts. The brothers and sisters see all this and take it to heart. Perhaps, then, you will be able to run as a candidate in the next election, and you will have a hope to be elected as a leader. If you can truly do some important duty, you will gain God's blessing. If you truly have a burden and have such a sense of responsibility, and wish to carry a load, then hurry up and train yourself. Focus on practicing the truth and come to act with principles. Once you have life experience and can write articles of testimony, you will truly have grown. And if you can bear witness for God, then you can certainly gain the work of the Holy Spirit. If the Holy Spirit is working on you, it means that God looks on you with favor, and with the Holy Spirit guiding you, your opportunity will soon arise. You may have a burden now, but your stature is insufficient and your life experience too shallow, so even if you were to become a leader, you would be liable to tumble. You must pursue life entry, resolve your extravagant desires first, willingly be a follower, and come to submit to God truly, with no words of complaints for whatever He orchestrates or arranges. When you are possessed of this stature, your opportunity will come. That you wish to take on a heavy load, that you have this burden, is a good thing. It shows that you have a proactive heart that seeks to make progress and that you want to be considerate of God's intentions and follow God's will. This is not an ambition, but a true burden; it is the responsibility of those who

**pursue the truth and the object of their pursuit. You have no selfish motives and are not out for your own sake, but to bear witness for God and satisfy Him—this is what is most blessed by God, and He will make suitable arrangements for you. ... God’s intention is to gain more people who can bear witness for Him; it is to perfect all who love Him, and to make a group of people who are of one heart and mind with Him as early as possible. Therefore, in God’s house, all who pursue the truth have great prospects, and the prospects of those who love God sincerely are without limit. Everyone should understand God’s intention. It is indeed a positive thing to have this burden, and it is something those with a conscience and reason should possess, but not everyone will necessarily be able to take on a heavy load. Where does this discrepancy come from? Whatever your strengths or capabilities, and however high your IQ may be, what is crucial is your pursuit and the path you walk”** (The Word, Vol. 5. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers. The

Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers (6)). I saw from God’s word that whether we are promoted and cultivated depends on our pursuit and path. If we pursue the truth and genuinely bear a burden, and have some caliber and talent, the church will give us opportunities for promotion and cultivation, and let us supervise some work. But if we don’t pursue the truth, and instead always pursue fame and status, taking the wrong path, then even if we become a leader, we won’t last long. I applied God’s word to myself and felt ashamed. I saw that I was being entirely unreasonable and that I didn’t know myself whatsoever. I thought I was especially capable and good, and that if my partnered sisters were promoted, that meant I also deserved to be promoted. I didn’t reflect on myself and come to an understanding of whether I was actually someone who pursued the truth, whether my humanity was qualified, and whether I could truly bear the burden of the

work. Instead, I blindly compared myself to others and pursued promotion. I always wanted to prove I was just as good as anyone else, and obtain a high status to show off in front of more people and make others look up to me. I always performed my duty with my own ambitions and desires, so even if I became a leader or worker, I would still be working for fame and status, and it would be impossible to do my duty well. That I wasn't a leader was protection for me. I thought how someone with genuine reason would be able to submit, reflect and know themselves, and be content to perform their own duty well in this situation. They would also reflect on their shortcomings and inadequacies, seek the truth to resolve their problems, and strive to make progress and change. Reflecting on myself based on God's word, I saw that I actually had average caliber and wasn't someone who pursued the truth. I was simply satisfied to finish my daily tasks and didn't focus on understanding and resolving my corrupt dispositions. After years of believing in God, I was still very competitive. Regarding my reputation and status, I was always worried about gaining or losing them—when I didn't get status, I even vented my anger onto my duty and disregarded the work. In what sense did I possess any truth reality? Despite this, I still wanted to be promoted. I truly didn't have the slightest self-knowledge! I knew I shouldn't blindly pursue reputation and status anymore. I should be submissive and do my present duty in a down-to-earth manner. That is the humanity and reason I ought to possess. When I realized this, I no longer felt the disturbance and constraints of this situation, and I began to make normal progress on the work at hand. I also began thinking about how to do the wrap-up work in more detail and more thoroughly, so that I could finish without regrets. Practicing this way, I felt very secure.

After some time, the church arranged for me to supervise a church's watering work. When I heard this arrangement, I had mixed feelings. I felt

embarrassed, and ashamed—I had misunderstood and guessed about my leaders that they had a prejudice against me and deliberately hadn't promoted or cultivated me. That was entirely a consequence of my strong desire for status. In the days that followed, when I encountered things I didn't understand, I sought answers with my partners, and I spent nearly all my time on watering work. But after a while, the work hadn't been very effective. Only then did I see I had many deficiencies. I also realized that even with status, it was impossible to work well if I lacked the truth. So I felt even more ashamed of the lofty ambition that I'd had to be a leader. During that time, I stopped thinking about how to make others admire me; I only thought of how to perform the watering work well. I had a more down-to-earth attitude toward my duty. So I believed I had changed a little, and that I could do my duty with ease and get on with my proper task. But when another environment came upon me, my desire for status was exposed again.

In June of 2021, the church arranged for me to take on another project with a higher workload and a tight deadline. Although we faced many difficulties, through our joint effort, after a few months, our work started to become more effective, and in the end we finished twice as much work as in the previous year. I was very proud, and felt I played a part in the fact that we achieved these results—if the leaders wanted to promote someone, they would likely think of me. In the next few days, I heard many times that the leaders were discussing promoting and cultivating people, and from time to time, I heard the names of brothers and sisters I knew. My mind started to churn once again, “I've been a leader and worker before, and recently I've been effective in my duty, so why haven't the leaders considered promoting me? Have the leaders seen through me and decided I am not someone who pursues the truth? Do they think I am someone who

can only handle external things? If that's what they think, will I ever have the chance to be promoted and cultivated?" Thinking this made the future feel bleak. I felt that no matter how hard I pursued it would always be this way—I would never have any hope of being promoted. I even became prejudiced against the leaders. Sometimes then, when the leaders talked to me, I just ignored them. I said as little as possible, and I didn't even like to see my sisters around me. I always looked sullen, I didn't want to speak much, and I wanted to spend all my time alone. Unconsciously, I stopped bearing a burden in my duty. I felt that no matter how well I did, the leaders couldn't see my effort and expense, so why should I work so hard? I would just do enough to get by.

One day, I read a passage of God's word: **"Antichrists' cherishment of their reputation and status goes beyond that of normal people, and is something within their disposition essence; it is not a temporary interest, or the transient effect of their surroundings—it is something within their life, their bones, and so it is their essence. This is to say that in everything antichrists do, their first consideration is their own reputation and status, nothing else. For antichrists, reputation and status are their life, and their lifelong goal. ... It can be said that in antichrists' hearts, they believe that pursuit of the truth in their faith in God is the pursuit of reputation and status; the pursuit of reputation and status is also the pursuit of the truth, and to gain reputation and status is to gain the truth and life. If they feel that they have no reputation, gains, or status, that no one admires them, or esteems them, or follows them, then they are very disappointed, they believe there is no point in believing in God, no value to it, and they say to themselves, 'Is such faith in god a failure? Is it hopeless?' They often deliberate such things in their hearts, they deliberate how they can carve a place**

**out for themselves in the house of God, how they can have a lofty reputation in the church, so that people listen when they talk, and support them when they act, and follow them wherever they go; so that they have the final say in the church, and fame, gain, and status—they really focus on such things in their hearts. These are what such people pursue. Why are they always thinking about such things? After reading the words of God, after hearing sermons, do they really not understand all this, are they really not able to discern all this? Are the words of God and the truth really not able to change their notions, ideas, and opinions? That is not the case at all. The problem lies in them, it is wholly because they do not love the truth, because, in their hearts, they are averse to the truth, and as a result, they are utterly unreceptive to the truth—which is determined by their nature essence”** (The Word, Vol. 4.

Exposing Antichrists. Item Nine (Part Three)). From God’s word, I saw that antichrists especially cherish fame and status, and see those things as more important than anything else. When they don’t receive status, they find belief in God tedious. They have no sincerity in their belief in God or duties, even less do they do these things to understand the truth. Instead, they do them to gain fame and status, and to make more people admire and look up to them. The dispositions of antichrists are especially evil. I thought of myself—I always pursued being promoted and cultivated, and when my ambitions and desires went unsatisfied, I became negative and unmotivated. My pursuit of fame and status was already out of my control; I had revealed the same disposition as an antichrist. I thought of how, during school, I took the satanic poisons of “Man struggles upward; water flows downward,” and “A soldier who doesn’t want to be a general is not a good soldier,” as the laws of survival, so I sought to get the best grades. If I didn’t get first place, I at least had to be an honors student and win the praise and respect of my

classmates and teachers. After I believed in God, I pursued status as my goal, thinking that if I had a high status, I could have a place in the church, I could make my presence known, I could get more people to look up to me, and I could make my voice heard. So when church work urgently required people and the leaders didn't promote me, I became negative and miserable, had no drive to perform my duty, and even felt there was no direction or goal to pursue in my belief in God. Only then did I see clearly that the pursuit of fame and status had become my nature. No matter what group of people I was in, I always wanted to be praised and admired by others, and I hated to be left behind. When the leaders appreciated me and promoted me to do important work, I was very satisfied and was energetic in my duty; without their appreciation and promotion, I became negative and antagonistic, I muddled through my duties, drifting along, and even wanted to give it all up. I suddenly realized I was in serious danger if I went on like this!

After that, I read in God's word: **"God likes people who pursue the truth, and the people He loathes the most are those who pursue fame, gain, and status. Some people really cherish status and reputation, are deeply attached to them, can't bear to give them up. They always feel that without status and reputation there is no joy or hope in living, that there is only hope in this life when they are living for status and reputation, and even if they have a bit of renown, they will carry on fighting, never giving up. If this is the thought and view you have, if your heart is filled with such things, then you are incapable of loving and pursuing the truth, you lack the right direction and aims in your faith in God, and are incapable of pursuing the knowledge of yourself, casting off corruption and living out the image of man; you let things slide when doing your duty, you are devoid of any sense of**

responsibility, and are satisfied only with not committing evil, not causing disturbance, not being cleared out. Could such people do their duty to an acceptable standard? And could they be saved by God? Impossible. When you act for the sake of reputation and status, you even think, 'As long as what I do isn't an evil deed and doesn't constitute a disturbance, then even if my motive is wrong, no one can see it or condemn me.' You do not know that God scrutinizes all. If you do not accept or practice the truth, and are spurned by God, it is all over for you. All who do not have God-fearing hearts think themselves smart; in fact, they do not even know when they have offended Him. Some people do not see these things clearly; they think, 'I only pursue reputation and status in order to do more, to take on more responsibility. It doesn't constitute a disruption or disturbance to the church's work, and it certainly doesn't damage the interests of God's house. It's not a major problem. I simply love status and protect my status, but that's not an evil act.' On its surface, such a pursuit may seem not to be an act of evil, but what does it lead to in the end? Will such people gain the truth? Will they achieve salvation? Absolutely not. Therefore, pursuing reputation and status is not the right path—it runs in exactly the opposite direction of the pursuit of the truth. In sum, regardless of what the direction or target of your pursuit is, if you do not reflect on the pursuit of status and reputation, and if you find it very difficult to put these things aside, then they will affect your life entry. As long as status has a place in your heart, it will totally control and influence your life's direction and the goals you strive for, in which case it will be very difficult for you to enter the truth reality, to say nothing of achieving changes in your disposition; whether you are ultimately able to gain God's approval, of course, goes without saying.



**What's more, if you are never able to put aside your pursuit of status, this will affect your ability to adequately do your duty, which will make it very difficult for you to become an acceptable created being. Why do I say this? God loathes nothing more than when people pursue status, because the pursuit of status is a satanic disposition, it is a wrong path, it is born of the corruption of Satan, it is something condemned by God, and it is the very thing that God judges and purifies. God loathes nothing more than when people pursue status, and yet you still mulishly compete for status, you unfailingly cherish and protect it, always trying to take it for yourself. And in nature, is all of this not antagonistic to God? Status is not ordained for people by God; God provides people with the truth, the way, and the life, and ultimately makes them become an acceptable created being, a small and insignificant created being—not someone who has status and prestige and is revered by thousands of people. And so, no matter what perspective it is viewed from, the pursuit of status is a dead end. No matter how reasonable your excuse for pursuing status is, this path is still the wrong one, and is not approved of by God. No matter how hard you try or how great the price you pay, if you desire status, God will not give it to you; if it's not given by God, you will fail in fighting to obtain it, and if you keep fighting there will only be one outcome: You will be revealed and eliminated, and you will meet with a dead end”** (The

Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Nine (Part Three)). After reading God's words, I was terrified, and felt that this was God's warning to me. If I still cherished status, and thought life had no pleasure or hope without status and important roles, pursuit like this was contending for status and going against God, not conducting myself and performing my duty from the position of a created being. Continuing unrepentant in this way, I would be

sent to hell and punished! Afraid and trembling, I read this passage of God's word several times in a row, and from my heart, I felt that God's righteous disposition brooks no offense. I used to think that humans have corrupt dispositions, so it is very normal to pursue fame and status—who doesn't want to improve their station? So, I didn't take my revelations of corruption in this area seriously; even though I felt negative sometimes, I'd feel better in a couple of days. It wouldn't delay my work too much, and I didn't do anything out of line, so I didn't think it was a big problem. Only now, through contemplating God's words, did I understand something. Pursuing fame and status is a satanic disposition, it is in conflict with God and is the path of resisting Him. It is a dead end! I thought of the archangel, whose status was already high enough in the beginning, but who still wasn't satisfied. It wanted to be on an equal footing with God, and in the end, God threw it into the air. Wasn't I also acting like this? I was already in charge of some work in the church, and still I wasn't satisfied. I didn't strive to achieve the best results in my own duty. Instead, I strove with all my heart to reach a higher status, to do greater work to show off and make people look up to me. If that desire wasn't satisfied, I became negative, slowed in my work, and began muddling through. Sometimes I even wanted to back down altogether. I didn't care at all if the work of the church suffered losses. My ambitions and desires were truly overpowering—where was my God-fearing heart? Did I have any submission toward God to speak of? Always pursuing fame and status, neglecting my duties, not only delayed my own life entry, but it also harmed the work of the church. I was walking the path of resisting God, so how could God not detest me? Thinking of this, I felt fear and regret. I quickly prayed to God to repent, no longer wanting to pursue fame and status.

Afterward, I found the way to escape fame and status in God's words. God's words say: **"As one member of created humanity, a person must keep their own position, and behave conscientiously. Dutifully guard that which is entrusted to you by the Creator. Do not act out of line, or do things beyond your range of ability or which are loathsome to God. Do not try to be great, or become a superman, or above others, nor seek to become God. This is how people should not desire to be. Seeking to become great or a superman is absurd. Seeking to become God is even more disgraceful; it is disgusting, and despicable. What is commendable, and what created beings should hold to more than anything else, is to become a true created being; this is the only goal that all people should pursue"** (The Word, Vol. 2. On Knowing God. God Himself, the Unique I). God's word clearly says that the pursuit of status, the pursuit of being a great person or a superman, is something that God detests. The actual pursuit people ought to have is being a genuine created being. After reading God's word, I knew what I should pursue: I am a created being, and God knows best what duty I can perform and what work I can undertake. No matter what position I am in, what God wants to see is that I can properly pursue the truth and perform the duty of a created being in a down-to-earth manner. I need to let go of my ambitions and desires, and no matter what duty I perform, I must submit to God's orchestrations and arrangements, sincerely fulfill my own responsibilities, and through this be effective in my duty. This is what I should do as a created being. After that, I no longer considered whether I would be promoted. Instead, I consciously contemplated how to be more efficient to achieve the best results in my duty, and I prayed to God and sought with my brothers and sisters to resolve things when difficulties arose. After a period of time, I worked with my

brothers and sisters to overcome some difficulties, and the efficiency of our work also improved.

In the days that followed, I still heard from time to time that my past partners had been promoted to be supervisors. Although I was still a little disappointed, because I felt others could make their presence known by being promoted while I was still stuck in the same place, I quickly realized that it was my desire for status at work again. So I quickly prayed to God and rebelled against myself. I thought of God's word: **"Status is not ordained for people by God; God provides people with the truth, the way, and the life, and ultimately makes them become an acceptable created being, a small and insignificant created being—not someone who has status and prestige and is revered by thousands of people"** (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Nine (Part Three)). Pondering God's words, my goals were clear in my heart. I saw that status is not preordained for people by God. No matter what our duty may be, we are fulfilling our responsibility. It is also using our own strengths and functions in the right positions. Ultimately there are no higher or lower positions, and being a leader or a supervisor doesn't mean one has status or is better than others. What God asks of us is that we become qualified created beings, and submit to His orchestrations and arrangements. Only these are proper pursuits. If I cannot submit to God, if I cannot keep to my duties, and solely pursue climbing the ladder and gaining status, this is shameful, and I will be detested and cursed by God. By praying and reading God's words, I was no longer negative, and I could treat this matter correctly and perform my duty properly.

After going through these things, I realized God's good intentions. By not promoting me, He was protecting me. If I, with my love of status, really became a leader or worker, I would involuntarily walk the path of an

antichrist, and I would only come to ruin in the end. Now, I can be submissive and down-to-earth in my duty. This is the effect of God's words!

## **25. Oppressed by My Family: A Learning Experience**

By Wilma, Canada

I accepted Almighty God's gospel of the last days in 2016, and shared the gospel with my husband. After I gained faith in God, he noticed that my entire demeanor changed, and I was much more even-tempered. So my husband felt that believing in God was a really good thing, and he supported my belief. But he said he didn't have time to believe in God himself, and just wanted to make money. Then one day when he came home from work, he asked me, "You believe in 'Eastern Lightning,' don't you? I gave Mike a ride home today, and he told me that his church's pastors and elders all say that Eastern Lightning is not the true way, it has lofty sermons and it's easy to be misled. Mike urged me to remind you not to listen to Eastern Lightning's sermons." Mike was my husband's superior, a long-time believer in the Lord, and very talented. My husband really admired him. I saw that my husband believed what Mike said, so I told him, "You don't understand faith in God, so you can't just parrot what other people say." He hesitated for a moment, and then didn't say anything.

After some time passed, my husband got very serious one day and said to me, "I did some research online, and the Almighty God you believe in is that Eastern Lightning that the Chinese Communist Party (CCP) is cracking down on. There are many online opinions about Almighty God, saying that He's just a person, not God, and that they bring people into The Church of Almighty God to extort money from them. So from now on, you're not allowed to get together with people from The Church of Almighty God. I'm afraid you're going to be cheated." When I heard my husband say that, I got really angry and said, "Many of those online rumors are fabricated and

spread by the CCP. You haven't read the words of Almighty God, and you don't understand The Church of Almighty God, so you shouldn't make arbitrary judgments based on online rumors. You know that Christians all believe in the Lord Jesus and acknowledge that He is the true God. But two thousand years ago when the Lord Jesus came to do His work, many people condemned and denied Him. They said He was just an ordinary person, the son of a carpenter. Although the Lord Jesus looked like an ordinary person on the outside, He had a divine essence, and the ability to express the truth and redeem mankind. He was God's Spirit clothed in the flesh, the Redeemer of mankind. According to the CCP, anyone who looks like an ordinary person on the outside is not God. Doesn't that deny the Lord Jesus Christ as well? Like the Lord Jesus, on the outside Almighty God is an ordinary person, but He can express the truth, the voice of God. He is the Savior who has come down to earth. I've read a lot of Almighty God's word. He reveals many of the mysteries in the Bible, and shows how Satan corrupts people, how God saves mankind, the root of all darkness and evil in the world, and the truth about mankind's corruption. His word also shows us the path to deliverance from sin, receiving God's salvation, and entering the kingdom of heaven. No famous or great person can express these truths. Among all of mankind, who can express the truth? Who can redeem and save mankind? No one. This proves that Almighty God really is God's Spirit incarnate come to the human world, and that He is the one true God. Online, some are saying that Almighty God is a person, and not God. But all such things are rumors and devilish words that blaspheme God." I also told my husband that The Church of Almighty God has never made appeals for contributions. All the books of God's word that we read are distributed for free. The CCP's claims that The Church of Almighty God is extorting money from people are all rumors and slander. I told him not to believe that

deceptive nonsense. But after listening to what I had to say, he walked off without a word.

One time when I came back from sharing the gospel, my husband looked unhappy and said to me, “I did some research online, and saw that people who believe in Almighty God abandon their families. You’ve been going out a lot lately. Are you planning to take off?” I said, “I take such good care of our home. How could I abandon it? I go out to share the gospel, so people know the Savior has come and they can accept His salvation. How could that mean I’m going to abandon my family? You’ve seen how people are becoming more corrupt all the time, following evil trends and living in sin. Look at your friends—they all either gamble or go to prostitutes. The world has become so evil. Mankind denies and resists God, and corruption is at an all-time high. The Bible prophesies there will be great disasters in the last days that will destroy corrupt mankind. In the current age, disasters are becoming more and more serious. Only by accepting Almighty God’s judgment and chastisement, and casting off sin and corruption, can mankind be protected by God, survive in the midst of disaster, and enter His kingdom. Those of us who believe in Almighty God understand His urgent intention to save humanity; we forgo the pleasures of the flesh, and spread and bear witness to God’s kingdom gospel. This is right and just! But the CCP doesn’t allow people to believe in God, share the gospel, or bear witness to Him. The CCP is arresting and persecuting Christians like crazy, causing lots of Christians to leave their families, unable to go back, and some are even arrested and imprisoned, or persecuted to death. Isn’t this all the result of the CCP’s persecution of Christians? But the CCP makes false accusations about the victims, saying that people who believe in God are abandoning their families. Isn’t that distorting the facts, and turning the truth on its head? The CCP is evil, and



tells nothing but lies. Not only do you not hate the CCP—you even believe their devilish words. You’re just going along with the CCP, saying that those of us who believe in God desert our families. That’s confounding right and wrong.” But my husband was deceived by the CCP’s lies, and wouldn’t listen to anything I said. He got very angry and said, “I don’t care. You can believe in anything you want, but you’re not allowed to believe in Almighty God.” Seeing how harsh his attitude was, I panicked. We’d been married for over a decade, and had been through many hardships together. Whatever issues we faced, we discussed together, and supported each other, without any major disputes. But now he was so angry with me because of my faith in Almighty God. I felt so sad, and said a silent prayer, hoping that God would guide me to understand His intention. After praying, I remembered this in God’s word: **“In every step of work that God does within people, externally it appears to be interactions between people, as if born of human arrangements or from human disturbance. But behind the scenes, every step of work, and everything that happens, is a wager made by Satan before God, and requires people to stand firm in their testimony to God”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Only Loving God Is Truly Believing in God). God’s word helped me understand that on the surface, it seemed like my husband was obstructing my belief in God. But in reality, Satan’s interference was behind it all. Satan wants to rule over and possess people forever, and did everything possible to obstruct me from believing in and following God. Satan used rumors and untruths to mislead my husband so he would obstruct and persecute me; as a result, I would be constrained by my affection for my husband, and I would forsake the true way and betray God. Satan is so treacherous and malicious! After coming to understand that, I resolved that no matter how Satan interfered, I would remain committed to believing in and following God, and never

compromise with Satan! So I told my husband, “I believe in and follow God. It’s the right path of life. This is my choice, and you have no right to interfere!” There was nothing my husband could say. He was furious, and walked out.

One day when my husband saw me listening to hymns of God’s word, he immediately pulled a long face and angrily said, “Didn’t I tell you that you’re not allowed to believe in Almighty God? Why don’t you ever listen? Mike has believed in the Lord for many years, and he is a devout Christian. He told me that Eastern Lightning is not the true way. So if you want to believe in God, you can go to Mike’s church. It’s big and has a good reputation. If you want to go, I can accompany you. We can go together every week, and Mike can get his pastor to talk with you.” I told him, “Why do you believe what Mike says and revere that pastor so much? You just see that the pastor has credentials, and a good reputation, but you don’t look at what they actually preach. They just talk about biblical knowledge and doctrines, the same old platitudes. But when it comes to putting the Lord’s words into practice or resolving the problem of people living in sin, they basically have nothing to say. I won’t get anything out of attending that church. I get enjoyment and sustenance from The Church of Almighty God gatherings, and can understand more about the truth, and know how to live out normal humanity. You yourself said that after I found faith in God, I changed a bit. So why don’t you talk based on facts, and stop believing in rumors and preventing me from believing in Almighty God?” He couldn’t argue against that, so he just threatened me, saying: “I try to persuade you, but you won’t listen. If you insist on believing in Almighty God, hand over all of your money and bank savings to me, and transfer the house that’s under your name to my name.” Hearing him say that was like a knife to my heart. During all our years of marriage, I was always frugal and worked

hard to earn money. Scraping together a down payment and buying a house wasn't easy. I was even reluctant to buy new clothes. I was totally devoted to our home, and never thought my husband could say such heartless things to me. How could he ignore all our years together as husband and wife just because of my faith in God? Without any money or property, if he kicked me out, what would I do? When I thought about all these things, it was like a knife piercing my heart. I went into the bedroom and started crying, praying to God through my tears, "Oh God, I'm weak and in pain. I don't know how to get through something like this. Please guide me to understand Your intention." After I prayed, I thought of God's word: **"In the past, people would all come before God to make their resolutions, and they would say: 'Even if no one else loves God, I must love Him.' But now, refinement comes upon you, and since this does not align with your notions, you lose faith in God. Is this genuine love? You have read many times about the deeds of Job—have you forgotten about them? True love can only take shape from within faith. You develop real love for God through the refinements you undergo, and it is through your faith that you are able to be considerate of God's intentions in your practical experiences, and it is also through faith that you rebel against your own flesh and pursue life; this is what people should do. If you do this, then you will be able to see God's actions, but if you lack faith, then you will be unable to see God's actions or to experience His work"**

(The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Those Who Are to Be Made Perfect Must Undergo Refinement). God's word gave me strength. In the face of oppression and hardships, what God wants is genuine faith and love. No matter what we're going through, or how much we suffer, we cannot stray from Him. I was very lucky to hear God's voice in the last days, welcome the Lord's return, witness God's appearance, and enjoy the sustenance of so many

truths. This was God's salvation. Suffering in order to follow Christ has value and meaning. It is persecution for the sake of righteousness. I thought of the Lord Jesus' apostles and disciples, who followed God and bore witness for Him. They were brutally persecuted by the Roman government, condemned and oppressed by the religious leaders, and even martyred for the Lord, sacrificing their lives. Compared to the saints of the past, my suffering today is not even worth mentioning. I shouldn't feel sorry for myself, but should learn from them, and follow God till the end no matter how great the suffering. Thinking about these things, I dried my tears, came out of the bedroom, and said to my husband: "We've been married for more than a decade, and I've been devoted to our home. Now you want to take all my money and property away, and control me financially to force me to give up the true way. But I won't listen to you. I must believe in God!" When my husband heard me say that, he flew into a rage, as if he'd lost his mind. He snatched away my MP3 player, and then tore through all of my personal belongings. He took all of my identity documents, my gold and silver jewelry, and my bank cards and cash. He also grabbed my phone, threw it to the floor, and then picked up a stool and smashed the phone, leaving it mangled. He did that to cut off my connection to the outside world. Then he called my parents, sisters, and brother-in-law over to our place, and they all ganged up on me.

My family members regularly watched Chinese news media and had no discernment about the CCP. They just swallowed the CCP rhetoric whole. My sisters had found many slanderous rumors online that the CCP made up about The Church of Almighty God, and showed me things the CCP fabricated about the Zhaoyuan case. I told them, "I know all that. The Zhaoyuan case was tried in a CCP court, and the criminals all denied they were part of The Church of Almighty God. In court, they clearly said that

they never had any contact with The Church of Almighty God, but the CCP judge insisted on saying they were church members. Isn't that framing and blaming the church? Isn't that a false legal case fabricated by the CCP? You all know that the CCP is an atheistic political party, and has persecuted religious beliefs ever since it came to power. So how can you believe anything the CCP says against The Church of Almighty God?" But my two sisters had been deceived by the CCP, and didn't use any discernment about the rumors they spread. They told me, "If many well-known news outlets are saying that, how could it be wrong?" I said, "All the Chinese news media outlets are controlled by the CCP government—they're CCP mouthpieces. They have to say whatever the CCP tells them to say, and they don't dare report the real facts. The CCP has also bought off more than a few foreign media outlets, and they, too, speak for the CCP. Isn't any of this clear to you? Facts speak louder than words, and I urge you to open your eyes and stop blindly believing the rumors you hear." When I finished, they had nothing to say. My mom got angry, and said, "So many of us have tried to talk to you, but you won't listen. Is it really that hard for you to give up Almighty God? The whole family is worried about you because of your belief. Why do you refuse to listen to our advice?" Then she started crying. Seeing my mom so sad was hard for me. She raised all three of us by herself, and suffered a lot. Now she was old, and I was still causing her to worry. That thought left me on the verge of tears. Then my younger sister said, "Are you trying to infuriate our mom? Do you want her, or Almighty God?" My other sister said coldly, "If you insist on believing in Almighty God, don't blame us for not treating you like family. We'll report you to the police, and say you've scammed people and taken their money. Then they'll deport you to China. Don't forget, the only way you could apply to come to Canada was because I sponsored you." When I heard that, I was incredibly

angry. I never thought they could come up with such malicious, despicable tactics to threaten me, and force me to abandon my faith in God. But they couldn't fool me. I was already a naturalized Canadian citizen, so they couldn't arbitrarily charge me with a crime and get me deported. Seeing my own family oppress me that way was so painful, and I couldn't hold back my tears. But just then, I remembered a church hymn, "You're With Me All the Way": "Your words and work guide me, and Your love draws me to follow You. I eat, drink, and relish Your words every day. You are my constant companion. When I am negative and weak, Your words are my sustenance and my strength. When I suffer setbacks and failures, Your words are the hand helping me up. When I am besieged by Satan, Your words give me courage and wisdom. When I encounter trials and refinement, Your words guide me to stand firm in my witness. Your words accompany and guide me, and my heart is warm and at ease. Your love is so real, and my heart is full of gratitude" (Follow the Lamb and Sing New Songs). Even though my family didn't understand me and oppressed me, God was always by my side, using His word to enlighten and guide me, and help me see through Satan's tricks. God also used His words to comfort me, and give me confidence and strength. Thinking about things that way, I didn't feel so miserable. I also recalled God's word: **"Do not be discouraged, do not be weak, and I will make things clear for you. The road to the kingdom is not so smooth; nothing is that simple! You want blessings to come to you easily, do you not? Today, everyone will have bitter trials to face. Without such trials, the loving heart you have for Me will not grow stronger and you will not have true love for Me. Even if these trials consist merely of minor circumstances, everyone must pass through them; it's just that the difficulty of the trials will vary from one person to another. ... Those who share in My bitterness will certainly share in**

**My sweetness. That is My promise and My blessing to you”** (The Word, Vol.

1. The Appearance and Work of God. Utterances of Christ in the Beginning, Chapter 41).

Pondering God’s word, I understood that the path to the kingdom of heaven is full of difficulties, which no one can avoid. My family’s oppression and attacks gave me a chance to bear witness to God before Satan, gain God’s guidance and enlightenment, and have faith and discernment. These are things I would never have gotten from a comfortable environment. That suffering had value and meaning! Since I firmly believe that this is the true way, and God’s work, no matter how much oppression and suffering I face, I will continue to follow Him.

Seeing that I wouldn’t compromise, my husband was livid. He became very aggressive and said, “I know it was your friend that convinced you to believe in Almighty God. She dragged you into the church so they could cheat you out of your money. I hate her to the core. Believe it or not, I’m going to kill her, even if it means prison time.” Hearing him say that was shocking and frightening, and I couldn’t help but start trembling. I never really imagined that the man I lived with for over 10 years could suddenly change and become so malevolent. How could that be my husband? He was clearly a devil who hated God and hated the truth! He could even say such malicious things to keep me from believing in God. Having seen my husband’s fiendish side, I was afraid he would actually kill my friend. Before I had a chance to recover, my mom said to me, “It looks like you two are going to be fighting. Get some clothes and come stay at my place for a few days. Don’t have outside contacts or go to work. Just stay at home, and think about what you’ve done.” Hearing my mom say that worried me. There was no telling what my husband would do when he went mad. My phone was smashed and useless, and at my mom’s place I couldn’t contact anyone or even go to work. Wasn’t that putting me under house

arrest? How could I warn my friend, get in touch with the church, or lead the church life? I urgently called on God, asking Him to guide me. Then I remembered that in Western countries, religious beliefs are protected, and they don't interfere with people's freedom of belief. My family said they wanted to report me to the police, and slander me. But I also could file a report with the police, which would protect my friend, and get the police involved so my family wouldn't dare do anything rash. So I said to my mom, "I don't want to go to your house. I want to go file a police report." When they heard that, they were stunned. I left right away and went to the police station, and told the officers that I was being persecuted by my family for my belief in God. After the police heard my story, they could hardly imagine that something like that could happen in a Western country. They were sympathetic, and took me back home. The police gave my husband and family a warning, saying, "In Western countries we have freedom of religious beliefs. You cannot interfere with her belief or restrict her personal freedom. If she wants to go to work, you can't stop her. Furthermore, identifying documents are personal property, and you must return them to her." After hearing what the police said, they didn't dare try to coerce me. I was so grateful to God, and thanked Him for giving me a way out.

My husband was subject to legal restraints, so he didn't dare directly coerce me or prevent me from believing in God. But he was adamant, and kept thinking of ways to force me to give up my faith in God. Two days later, he pressured me to transfer the house into his name. When he said that, I was a bit worried. Just two days before, he had confiscated all my cash and gold and silver jewelry, and now he wanted me to transfer the house into his name. So if he forced me to leave our home, I would have nothing. And my parents and sisters wouldn't take me in. Thinking about all



that, it was hard to bear, but then I remembered God's word: **"When God works, cares for a person, and looks upon this person, and when He favors and approves this person, Satan trails closely behind, trying to mislead the person and bring them to harm. If God wishes to gain this person, Satan will do everything in its power to obstruct God, using various wicked ploys to tempt, disturb and impair the work of God, in order to achieve its hidden objective. What is this objective? It does not want God to gain anyone; it wants to snatch possession of those whom God wishes to gain, it wants to control them, to take charge of them so they worship it, so they join it in committing evil acts, and resist God. Is this not Satan's sinister motive?"** (The Word, Vol. 2. On Knowing God. God Himself, the Unique IV). **"If they wish to be saved, and wish to be completely gained by God, then all those who follow God must face temptations and attacks both great and small from Satan. Those who emerge from these temptations and attacks and are able to fully defeat Satan are those who have been saved by God. This is to say, those who have been saved unto God are those who have undergone God's trials, and who have been tempted and attacked by Satan an untold number of times. Those who have been saved unto God understand God's intentions and requirements, and are able to submit to God's sovereignty and arrangements, and they do not forsake the way of fearing God and shunning evil amid Satan's temptations. Those who are saved unto God possess honesty, they are kindhearted, they differentiate between love and hate, they have a sense of justice and are rational, and they are able to care for God and treasure all that is of God. Such people are not bound, spied upon, accused, or abused by Satan; they are completely free, they have been completely liberated and released. Job was just such a man of freedom, and this is precisely the significance of why**

**God had handed him over to Satan”** (The Word, Vol. 2. On Knowing God. God’s Work, God’s Disposition, and God Himself II). Job had genuine faith in God, was obedient, and feared Him, which is why he could stand firm amidst Satan’s temptations, and free himself from Satan’s bonds and accusations. Job believed that God presides over all things, and that all he possessed was bestowed upon him by God. So whether God gave or took away, Job was able to accept and submit. When Job lost his property and his children, and even when his whole body broke out in boils, he still didn’t complain to God, but praised His name as before. Job’s wife said to him, “Do you still retain your integrity? Curse God, and die” (Job 2:9). And Job rebuked her, saying, “You speak as one of the foolish women speaks. What? Shall we receive good at the hand of God, and shall we not receive adversity?” (Job 2:10). Job’s testimony really inspired me, and I wanted to emulate him. No matter how my husband oppressed me, or how much property he took from me, and even if he threw me out of the house and left me with nothing, I would still rely on my faith to follow God, stand firm in my witness, and humiliate Satan.

The next day when we went to the bank to transfer the mortgage on our house, the bank employee told us that our mortgage was a new loan. So if we wanted to get a new mortgage, the process would be really complicated and we would suffer a considerable loss. The bank employee suggested that if at all possible, we should wait five more years, and make the transfer when the original mortgage payment period expired. My husband had no choice, so he gave up. Thereafter, I got back in touch with my brothers and sisters. When my husband found out he asked me, “Are you going to keep attending gatherings?” I responded, “Do you still want to stop me from attending gatherings? If so, I can move out and live somewhere else. Aren’t you always worried that if I believe in Almighty

God someone will swindle me, and I'll abandon my family? The whole time I've been a believer, has The Church of Almighty God ever cheated me out of any money? Have I abandoned our family like the rumors about believers claim?" My husband was stunned. After a while he said, "You're right. I haven't seen The Church of Almighty God cheat you out of any money, and you haven't abandoned our family. I was too gullible about those rumors, and I only wanted to stop you because I was afraid you would be cheated. From now on, you can believe in whatever you like." I was so happy that my husband would never try to control my faith in God or stop me from attending gatherings again. Later, he started feeling that money management wasn't his strong suit, and taking care of our finances required a lot of time and effort, so he handed over all of our funds and let me manage them. And he never mentioned transferring the mortgage to his name again.

By experiencing my family's oppression, I saw how evil the CCP really is. The CCP is not only running amok suppressing, persecuting, and arresting Christians in China, but is also wantonly fabricating rumors online to smear The Church of Almighty God. The CCP wants to mislead the whole world to become hostile to The Church of Almighty God, side with them and resist God, and be condemned to hell and punished along with them. The CCP is a demon, an evil spirit that resists God, and misleads and devours people. Although Satan is evil and contemptible, God's wisdom is exercised based on Satan's schemes. Satan wanted to use my family's oppression to get me to betray God and lose my chance to be saved, but never imagined that I would use that experience to develop discernment, and really see Satan's ugliness. In my heart, I have cursed and forsaken Satan, and my faith in God is even stronger. Thanks be to God!

## **26. Responsibility Is Key to Preaching the Gospel Well**

By Marie Hortence, Côte d'Ivoire

I used to not take my duties seriously, I slacked off a lot, and did things very perfunctorily. I would invite potential gospel recipients to listen to sermons, but wasn't willing to talk with them or ask how they felt about what they'd heard. I thought that inviting a lot of people to come listen meant I was doing my duty well. Plus, this was easier for me. I found it hard to talk with them; not only did it take time, answering their questions also took effort, so I didn't want to engage with them. I thought that the gospel staff would talk with them and it would be enough, that it didn't matter if I didn't know their situation. At a gathering, the leader said, "When we invite people to come hear the sermons, we need to know what's going on with them afterward, see if they come to gatherings, if they understand what was said, and if they have any notions. We need to do our best to help them out of love, and this is our responsibility, too." But I thought it was a hassle, so I didn't sacrifice that much or endure much hardship. I took the easiest path, and gave no thought to whether I achieved results. One time, the leader said there were some people who invited a lot of listeners, but very few of them truly sought or investigated. I knew I was one of these people; I only concerned myself with surface-level work, and got no real results. Afterward, the leader came to examine my work, and said, "How are these potential gospel recipients doing now?" I was embarrassed, and didn't know what to say. I wasn't in contact with many of them, and hadn't reached out to some people who weren't coming to hear sermons. I had abandoned them just like that.

I started reflecting after talking with the leader. I saw that God says: **“People are needed to perform all that God requires people to do, and all of the various kinds of work in the house of God—these things all count as people’s duties. No matter what work people do, this is the duty they should perform. Duties cover a very broad scope, and involve many areas, but no matter what duty you perform, to put it simply, it is your obligation and something you should be doing. As long as you strive to perform it well with your heart, God will approve of you, and acknowledge you as someone who truly believes in God. No matter who you are, if you are always trying to avoid or hide from your duty, then there is a problem. To put it mildly, you are too lazy, too slippery, you are idle, and you love leisure and loathe labor. To put it more seriously, you are unwilling to perform your duty, and you have no loyalty or submission. If you can’t even exert yourself physically to shoulder this little bit of work, what can you do? What are you capable of doing properly? If a person truly has loyalty and a sense of responsibility toward their duty, then as long as it is required by God, and as long as it is needed by the house of God, they will do anything they are asked, without making their own choices. Is it not one of the principles of performing a duty to undertake and do well that which one is able and ought to do? (Yes.)”** (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Ten: They Despise the Truth, Brazenly Flout Principles, and Ignore the Arrangements of God’s House (Part Four)). **“If you are submissive and sincere, then when you carry out a task, you will not be perfunctory, and you will not slack off deceitfully, instead you will put all of your heart and strength into it. If a person’s inner state is wrong, and negativity arises in them, they lose their drive and want to be perfunctory; they know full well in their heart that their state is not right, and yet they still do not try to fix this by seeking the**

**truth. People like this have no love for the truth, and are only slightly willing to perform their duty; they are disinclined to make any effort or suffer hardship, and they are always trying to slack off deceitfully. In fact, God has already scrutinized all of this—so why does He pay no heed to these people? God is just waiting for His chosen people to wake up, discern and expose those people, and eliminate them”** (The Word, Vol. 4.

Exposing Antichrists. Item Ten: They Despise the Truth, Brazenly Flout Principles, and Ignore the Arrangements of God’s House (Part Four)). In God’s words, I saw that people who are responsible in their duty don’t need supervision from others to complete the work; they put their heart into their duty. But people who aren’t serious about their duty only put on an act and go through the motions. Even if it looks to people like they’ve done a lot of work, it’s only superficial, and hasn’t achieved any real results. They’re deceiving people. God’s words exposed my state. I was happy when I invited potential gospel recipients to come to sermons because when everyone saw how many people I invited, they’d think I was a responsible person. But in reality, when I needed to know what was going on with them afterward, I didn’t want to pay a price, or put in more time and effort. I just wanted to pass the work off to the gospel staff. I liked taking the easy way out. Whichever way meant less hardship and was most comfortable, I took that one. I took shortcuts when things got difficult. I wanted to give up when something seemed hard or I had to put in a lot of effort. I was such a slacker! I couldn’t be bothered to find out what questions the potential gospel recipients had after listening to the sermons, whether they kept coming to gatherings, and if not, why they weren’t there, et cetera. I was really irresponsible in my duty, and didn’t give of myself, yet I wanted it to look like I was effective in my duty. I was so sly and deceitful, I didn’t deserve to be trusted. I remembered another past experience of mine. When I was in school and got bad grades, I had to

take the class again, but even then I still didn't study hard. I've always preferred easy work to hard work, and have been lazy. It's part of my nature. After realizing this, I started putting more thought into my work, changing my ways, and communicating with those potential gospel recipients. I also talked with gospel staff and sought their help. When I did this, I became a bit more effective.

Later, I handed those who were ready to accept the true way to waterers, but there still weren't many people who continued coming to gatherings. There was one person who was too busy with work to come to gatherings. Also, her mother had just passed away. She was heartbroken, and withdrew from the world. I didn't know how to fellowship with her other than to find some simple words to say. And when some people encountered problems, I couldn't find the right words of God to fellowship with them and resolve their problems. This was hard for me. I preferred inviting people to come listen to sermons, because it was easier. I didn't really like talking to them; I was afraid they'd ask questions I couldn't answer, so I chose to avoid or abandon them. About half a year later, I saw only six of those who I invited had accepted God's work of the last days, whereas other brothers and sisters had converted many people. I was ashamed and filled with regret. I had been negligent in my duties for these six months. If I could have turned back time, I wouldn't have been negligent. The fact that others had brought so many people before God showed that spreading the gospel wasn't difficult, that it just required some diligence, and that results were possible in this duty. I saw that Almighty God's words say: **"In spreading the gospel, people must fulfill their responsibility and deal with every potential gospel recipient earnestly. God saves man to the greatest extent possible, and people must be considerate of God's intentions, they must not carelessly pass over**

anyone who is seeking and investigating the true way. What's more, in spreading the gospel, you must grasp the principles. For every person who is investigating the true way, you must observe, understand, and get a grasp on such things as their religious background, whether their caliber is good or bad, and the quality of their humanity. If you find a person who thirsts for the truth, who can comprehend God's words, and who can accept the truth, then that person has been predestined by God. You should try with all your might to fellowship about the truth with them and win them over. However, if they are of poor humanity and awful character, and their thirst is a pretense, and they keep arguing, and cling to their notions, you should set them aside and give up on them. Some people who are investigating the true way have comprehension ability and are of great caliber, but are arrogant and self-righteous. They adhere tightly to religious notions, so you should fellowship about the truth to them with love and patience to help solve this. You should only give up if they do not accept the truth no matter how you fellowship with them—then you will have done everything you can. In brief, do not give up lightly on anyone who can acknowledge and accept the truth. As long as they are willing to investigate the true way and able to seek the truth, you should do all you can to read more of God's words to them and fellowship more of the truth to them, and to testify to God's work and resolve their notions and questions, so that you may win them over and bring them before God. This is in line with the principles of spreading the gospel. So, how can they be won over? If, in the process of engaging with them, you ascertain that this person is of good caliber and good humanity, you must do everything you can to fulfill your responsibility; you must pay a certain price, and use certain ways and means, and it doesn't matter what ways and means



**you employ as long as you use them to win that person over. In sum, in order to win them over, you must fulfill your responsibility, and use love, and do everything within your power. You must fellowship on all the truths that you understand and do all the things you should do. Even if this person is not won over, you will be left with a clear conscience. You will have done all that you can. If you do not fellowship the truth clearly, and the person keeps clinging to their notions, and if you lose your patience, and give up on them of your own accord, this is being negligent in your duty, and for you, this will be a transgression and a stain. Some people say, ‘Does having this stain mean that I have been condemned by God?’ Such matters depend on whether people do these things intentionally and habitually. God does not condemn people for occasional transgressions; they need only repent. But when they knowingly do wrong and refuse to repent, they are condemned by God. How could God not condemn them when they are clearly aware of the true way and yet deliberately sin? Viewed according to the truth principles, this is being irresponsible and perfunctory, and at the very least, these people have not fulfilled their responsibility; this is how God judges their mistakes. If they refuse to repent, they shall be condemned. And so, to reduce or avoid such mistakes, people should do all they can to fulfill their responsibilities, actively trying to address all the questions that people investigating the true way have, and definitely not putting off or delaying crucial questions”** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Spreading the Gospel Is the Duty to Which All Believers Are Honor-Bound). God’s words really got me thinking, and I was very moved. Spreading the gospel was my responsibility and God’s intention, I should have been giving it my all, but I wasn’t willing to make sacrifices in my duty to bring people to God. I was really lazy, and too perfunctory in my

duty. I didn't do as God said and give earnest attention to all who investigate the true way, or fulfill my responsibilities. I thought it was enough just to invite a lot of people to come listen, and that what came after wasn't my job. In my eyes, they were the waterers' responsibility, and whether they came to gatherings or not wasn't my problem or my responsibility. So when they didn't come to gatherings, I didn't try my best to find words from God to help them. I thought their problems were hard for me to solve, so I wanted to give up on them. But actually, as long as they fit the principles for preaching the gospel, I should give them serious attention, and it was me who invited them to come listen. In ordinary circumstances, I needed to continue communicating with them afterward, but I didn't. I just passed them off to the waterers and left it at that. I really had no sense of responsibility, nor consideration of God's intentions. Once I recognized my problem, I was determined to change my attitude, but I knew I couldn't do it alone. I needed to pray and seek God's assistance. Afterward, when I met with potential gospel recipients, I would often pray to God to help me bring them to Him, and have the will to work hard and make real sacrifices, not be lax with my duty like before. I also asked my leader how to get people to accept God's work of the last days. She shared some ways with me, and I started reflecting to see what I wasn't doing yet. I realized that I wasn't seeking truth in my work, and wasn't learning from my brothers and sisters. When some people didn't come to gatherings, I didn't want to know why, and just chose to give up on them. My attitude toward my duty was way too lax.

Having come to these realizations, I thought of how God says: **“How you regard God's commissions is extremely important, and this is a very serious matter. If you cannot complete what God has entrusted to people, then you are not fit to live in His presence and you should be**

**punished. It is perfectly natural and justified that humans should complete whatever commissions God entrusts to them. This is man's supreme responsibility, and is just as important as their very lives. If you do not take God's commissions seriously, then you are betraying Him in the most grievous way. In this, you are more lamentable than Judas, and should be cursed. People must gain a thorough understanding of how to treat what God entrusts to them and, at the very least, they must comprehend that the commissions He entrusts to humanity are exaltations and special favors from God, and that they are most glorious things. Everything else can be abandoned. Even if a person must sacrifice their own life, they must still fulfill God's commission"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. How to Know Man's Nature). After reading God's words, I was ashamed. As one of God's created beings, I should perform my duty well. This is my mission and the value of my existence. If I can't do this, then I will have lost the function I was created for, and won't be worthy to live before God. I will ultimately be loathed and eliminated by God. Spreading the kingdom gospel is God's most urgent desire, and God wishes for us to give our all in spreading the gospel and testifying for Him. We cannot be perfunctory in doing these things. I thought of when God called on Noah to build the ark. Although it was an extremely difficult task, Noah didn't give up. He didn't ask God when the ark would be finished, or when the flood would come. He just followed God's instructions and built the ark. After recognizing this, I realized that I needed to change my attitude toward my duty, follow Noah's example, and do my utmost when performing my duty. Once during a gathering, others were sharing their preaching experiences, and how they used God's words to resolve potential gospel recipients' issues. I was very

moved after listening to them. I didn't want to be lazy anymore. I wanted to be responsible and put all my energy into my duty.

After that, I would frequently observe which people didn't come to gatherings, immediately contact those who weren't there, and fellowship with them on God's words. When I put my heart into attending to each person, most of them came to gatherings regularly. I remember there was one person who hadn't come for several days. I sent her a text, but when she didn't respond for a few days, I began to worry. I called Brother Derly, a waterer, and learned that she'd encountered difficulties at work, and Derly had shared some of God's words with her. After hearing this, I felt it wasn't enough, so I asked Brother Derly to call her and fellowship over the phone. To my surprise, after fellowshipping, she agreed to attend the gathering that same day, and apologized for not coming before. Before long, she joined the church. My heart was overjoyed. I was so thankful to God! I saw that God's words say: **"If you are truly possessed of conscience and reason, then when you do things, you will put a little more heart into them, as well as a little more kindness, responsibility, and consideration, and you will be able to put forth more effort. When you can put forth more effort, the results of the duties that you perform will improve. Your results will be better, and this will satisfy both other people and God"**

(The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Life Entry Begins With the Performance of Duty). **"You must attain entry from the side of positivity. If you wait passively, then you are still being negative. You must be proactive in cooperating with Me; be diligent, and never be lazy. Always fellowship with Me and attain an even deeper intimacy with Me. If you do not understand, do not be impatient for quick results. It is not that I will not tell you; it is that I want to see whether you rely on Me when you are in My presence, and whether you are confident in**

**your dependence on Me. You must always remain close to Me, and place all matters in My hands. Do not go back in vain. After you have been unconsciously close to Me for a period of time, My intentions shall be revealed to you. If you grasp them, then you will truly come face to face with Me, and you will truly have found My face. You will have much clarity and steadfastness within, and you will have something to rely on. You will then also possess power, as well as confidence, and you will have a path forward. Everything will come easily to you”** (The Word,

Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Utterances of Christ in the Beginning, Chapter 9). God demands that we are active in the performance of our duties. We cannot be passive. When we encounter problems or difficulties, we must pray to God and seek the truth even more, and God will help us and guide us to understand the truth principles. Before, I was passive in my duty and lacked gumption. I would carelessly abandon potential gospel recipients. Guidance from God’s words made me understand that what’s in our heart is very important. When we treat people with love, and fellowship with sincerity, we will see God’s guidance. After I understood this, I prayed to God, asking Him to help me perform my duty well, and consciously practice His words.

Afterward, I was proactive in speaking with those potential gospel recipients, and I would continue to learn about their situation and fellowship God’s words with them patiently until they accepted God’s work of the last days. When I did this, I felt God guiding me bit by bit, helping me understand how to do my duty well, and I felt very reassured at heart. Thanks be to God!

## 27. What I Gained From Being Pruned

By Viola, Italy

I was supervising the video work in the church. I was a bundle of nerves every day because of the heavy workload. I was busy resolving all sorts of problems and following up on others' work. I couldn't let myself relax. After a little time passed, Sister Jennifer would often critique our videos, and say these problems were all due to our lack of effort in our duty. I felt a lot of resistance when I saw these messages from her. We were already doing our best to minimize mistakes, and achieving that much at work was already not too bad. Wasn't she just dragging out the process by nitpicking at small things? I never took her suggestions to heart, thinking she was making a fuss out of nothing and delaying our work. One day, I made an appointment with Jennifer to talk. I integrated some principles to fellowship on how her nitpicking was affecting our work progress. I was surprised when right after fellowshipping, she said in a harsh tone, "That's one aspect of the principle of the matter. But let me remind you—don't think that principles are an excuse for perfunctory and irresponsible behavior in your duty. These are two different things. Don't confuse them." When I heard what she said, although I didn't say anything, I had had it inside. I thought, "Don't you mean I'm perfunctory and irresponsible in my duty? You're obviously nitpicking and slowing things down, yet you criticize me! What's the big deal about some small problems? They won't affect the quality of the videos at all, and what we've achieved is already pretty good. You don't know how big our workload is, but you just pick at small issues and then prune me like this. You're so arrogant!" After that I refused to interact with Jennifer. As long as it was an issue she pointed out,

I became oppositional, and my emotions got involved when handling issues.

Almost every half month after this, Jennifer would prepare a summary of feedback for us about work issues. Once, she even shared this feedback with the leader. When I heard this, I was furious, thinking, “We made some mistakes, but with such a heavy workload every month, wasn’t it normal for there to be little things that weren’t done right? Was it really necessary to tell the leader? You obsess over little things, your standards are too high. Are you treating us brothers and sisters like machines? Can’t we ever make a mistake?” The more I thought, the more riled up I became. When the leader came to talk to me, I pointed the finger directly at Jennifer, saying she was extremely arrogant. She wasn’t self-aware, but just pointed at our problems. The leader saw I had no self-awareness, and fellowshipped that I needed to treat Jennifer properly. She told me to self-reflect and learn a lesson. But the leader’s words fell on deaf ears. I stalled resolving the issues Jennifer mentioned in her feedback, and didn’t put any effort into thinking about how to avoid similar issues in the future. I was vaguely aware that I wasn’t in a right state, so I sought God through prayer, asking Him to lead me to learn my lesson and gain self-awareness in this matter.

During my devotionals one day, I read some of God’s words which helped me gain some awareness of my state. God’s words say: **“When people love to argue over right and wrong, they try to clarify whether every single thing is right or wrong, they don’t stop until the matter has been cleared up and it is understood who was right and who was wrong, they are fixated by things for which there is no answer. Just what is the point of acting like this? Is it ultimately right to argue over right and wrong? (No.) Where is the mistake? Is there any connection between this and practicing the truth? (There is no connection.) Why do**

**you say there is no connection? Arguing over right and wrong is not adhering to the truth principles, it is not discussing or fellowshiping the truth principles; instead, people always talk about who was right and who was wrong, who was correct and who was mistaken, who was being reasonable and who wasn't, who had good reason, and who didn't, who expressed higher doctrine; this is what they examine. When God puts people through trials, they always try to reason with God, they always come out with some reason or another. Does God discuss such things with you? Does God ask what the context is? Does God ask about what your reasons and causes are? He does not. God asks whether you have an attitude of submission or resistance when He tries you. God asks whether or not you understand the truth, whether or not you are submissive. This is all God asks, nothing else. God does not ask you what the reason for your lack of submission is, He does not look at whether you have a good reason—He absolutely does not consider such things. God only looks at whether or not you are submissive. Regardless of your living environment and what the context is, God only scrutinizes whether there is submission in your heart, whether you have an attitude of submission. God does not debate right and wrong with you; God does not care what your reasons are. God only cares whether you are truly submissive—this is all that God asks you. Is this not a truth principle? The kind of people who love to argue over right and wrong, who love having verbal spats—are there the truth principles in their hearts? (No.) Why not? Have they ever paid any attention to the truth principles? Have they ever pursued them? Have they ever sought them? They have never paid them any attention, or pursued them or sought them, and they are totally absent from their hearts. As a result, they can only live within human notions, all that is**



**in their hearts is right and wrong, correct and incorrect, pretexts, reasons, sophistry, and arguments, soon after which they attack, pass judgment on, and condemn each other. The disposition of people like this is that they like debating right and wrong and judging and condemning people. People like this have no love or acceptance of the truth, they are liable to try and reason with God, even to pass judgment on God and resist God. Ultimately, they will end up being punished”**

(The Word, Vol. 5. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers (15)). From the exposure of God’s words, I saw that people who always talk about right and wrong in a situation will first investigate it thoroughly: who’s right, who’s wrong, who has reason on their side. If they can talk circles around others, they start arguing their own case, they fix their gaze on others, become noncompliant, oppositional, and even attack others without searching for the truth or reflecting on their own issues. They don’t submit to the situations God lays out for them. I thought about how I was acting this way. When Jennifer pointed out some problems in our work, I knew these problems existed, but I found reasons and excuses to justify myself, thinking that achieving this much in the work was already a great accomplishment considering our workload, and that small problems were unavoidable. I even tried to refute her with principles to stop her from pointing out problems, thinking that her requirements were too high, and that the problems were insignificant and it wouldn’t matter even if they weren’t resolved. When Jennifer criticized me for being perfunctory and irresponsible, not only did I not accept it from God, but I developed a bias against her and thought she was nitpicking. When she spoke sternly and her words hurt my pride, I labeled her disposition as arrogant, and even judged her in front of the leader, scheming to get the leader to take my side and view her in a bad light. When the leader helped me, I refused to listen. I

wasn't accepting situations from God or reflecting on my own problems. Rather, I made justifications, excuses, and debated who was right and wrong. All I showed was hot-headedness, without the slightest attitude of submission. How could I call myself a believer? I was acting like a disbeliever.

Afterward, I read another passage of God's words which helped me further understand God's intention. God's words say: **"Anything that people do touches on seeking the truth and putting the truth into practice; anything that touches on the truth relates to the quality of people's humanity, and the attitude with which they do things. Much of the time, when people do things in an unprincipled way it is because they don't understand the principles behind them. But a lot of the time, people do not only not understand the principles, they also do not wish to understand them. Even though they may know a little about them, they still don't wish to do better. This standard is not in their hearts, and neither is this requirement. So, it is very hard for them to do things well, it is very hard for them to do things in a way that is in line with the truth and that satisfies God. The key to whether people are able to perform their duties acceptably depends on what they strive for, whether or not they pursue the truth, and whether or not they love positive things. If people do not love positive things, it is not easy for them to accept the truth, which is very troublesome—even though they perform a duty, they are only laboring. Regardless of whether or not you understand the truth, and whether or not you are able to grasp the principles, if you perform your duty based on your conscience, you will, at the very least, achieve average results. Only this is acceptable. If you are then able to seek the truth and do things according to the truth principles, then you will be able to completely fulfill God's**

**requirements and be in accordance with God's intentions. What are God's requirements?** (That people give all their hearts and strength to performing their duties well.) **How should 'giving all their hearts and strength' be understood? If people devote their whole minds to performing their duties, then they are giving all their hearts. If they use every ounce of strength they have to perform their duties, then they are giving all their strength. Is it easy to give all your heart and strength? This is not easy to achieve without conscience and reason. If a person does not have a heart, if they are lacking in intellect and incapable of contemplation, and if, when faced with an issue, they do not know how to seek the truth, and have no ways or means to do it, are they capable of giving all their heart? Definitely not"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Man Is the Greatest Beneficiary of God's Management Plan). After pondering God's words, I understood His intention. God does not demand that people achieve perfection in their duties, but He looks at whether they've tried their best, and if their attitude is one of trying to improve at their duty. God examines people's hearts. I reflected on my attitude toward my duty compared to God's words. I always felt I had a heavy workload, with many things to consider and attend to, and that it was normal for small problems to arise in work. Sometimes even if I knew those problems could be avoided, I didn't want to put in the effort to improve things, which led to problems being prolonged and not resolved. But actually, God doesn't demand that I never make a mistake in my duty. He just loathes my perfunctory and irresponsible attitude. Jennifer was drawing my attention to a problem by pointing it out, helping me fix it in a timely manner and do my duty well. Once I realized this, my state improved somewhat. After that, I fellowshiped and summarized with the others, and thought of how to

change. The next time someone pointed out a problem, I wasn't as resistant and perfunctory about it, but I resolved it with everyone.

Later, I reflected on myself. Why was I so opposed to Jennifer's suggestions? Then I read another passage of God's words, and gained some self-awareness. God says: **"Antichrists' archetypal attitude toward pruning is to vehemently refuse to accept or admit it. No matter how much evil they do or how much harm they do to the work of God's house and the life entry of God's chosen people, they do not feel the slightest remorse or that they owe anything. From this point of view, do the antichrists have humanity? Absolutely not. They cause all sorts of damage to God's chosen people and bring harm to the work of the church—God's chosen people can see this as clear as day, and they can see antichrists' succession of evil deeds. And yet the antichrists do not accept or acknowledge this fact; they stubbornly refuse to admit that they are in error or that they are responsible. Is this not an indication that they are averse to the truth? Such is the extent to which antichrists are averse to the truth. No matter how much wickedness they commit, they stubbornly refuse to admit it, and they remain unyielding to the end. This sufficiently proves that antichrists never take the work of God's house seriously or accept the truth. They haven't come to believe in God; they are minions of Satan, come to disturb and disrupt the work of God's house. In antichrists' hearts there are only reputation and status. They believe that if they were to acknowledge their error, then they would have to accept responsibility, and then their status and reputation would be severely compromised. As a result, they resist with the attitude of 'deny until you die.' No matter how people expose or dissect them, they do their utmost to deny it. Whether their denial is deliberate or not, in short, in one regard these behaviors expose the**

**antichrists' nature essence of being averse to and hating the truth. In another regard, it shows how much the antichrists treasure their own status, reputation, and interests. What, meanwhile, is their attitude toward the work and interests of the church? It is one of contempt and irresponsibility. They lack all conscience and reason. Doesn't the antichrists' shirking of responsibility demonstrate these issues? In one regard, shirking responsibility proves their nature essence of being averse to and hating the truth, while in another regard, it shows their lack of conscience, reason, and humanity. No matter how much the brothers' and sisters' life entry is harmed by their disturbance and evildoing, they feel no reproach and could never be upset by this. What sort of creature is this? Even admission to part of their mistake would count as them having a bit of conscience and reason, but the antichrists do not even have that slight amount of humanity. So what would you say they are? The antichrists are devils in essence"** (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Nine (Part Three)). God's words expose that antichrists do not accept the truth. They're averse to the truth and hate truth by nature. When pruned and exposed, they throw themselves into making up excuses, and feel no remorse even if they cause serious damage to work. They can't even admit their mistakes and are particularly intransigent. I reflected after comparing myself to God's words. I was obviously perfunctory in my duty, and there were many oversights and problems, but I felt no guilt or remorse. When faced with being pruned and reminded, I wouldn't accept it. I always found reasons to justify myself and shrug it off. I wasn't willing to admit my own mistakes. I thought admitting mistakes would make me look bad, and harm my reputation, status, and image, causing others to look down on me. I was totally unreasonable. I was revealing a disposition of being averse to the truth. Others gave me suggestions to help me see ways I was lacking

in my duty, so I could rectify problems in a timely manner and do my duty better. But I never accepted this from God, nor did I reflect upon myself. So, the issue of being perfunctory in my duty was never resolved, and I never fulfilled my role as a supervisor, causing the others to be perfunctory in their duty and often make mistakes too. At this point, I finally saw that not resolving this satanic disposition of being averse to the truth made it hard for me to accept the truth and accept others' suggestions. If I continued to not repent or resolve this corrupt disposition, the problems and errors in my duty would grow, and eventually I'd do evil, oppose God and be loathed and eliminated by Him. Realizing this was really upsetting for me, and I prayed to God in repentance, willing to practice the truth in my duty from now on, and not live in corruption.

Later, I read another passage of God's words which gave me a path to resolve the disposition of being averse to the truth. God's words say: **"If someone gives you a suggestion when you do not understand the truth, and tells you how to act in accordance with the truth, you should first accept it and allow everyone to fellowship on it, and see if this path is correct or not, and whether it is in accordance with the truth principles or not. If you confirm that it is in accordance with the truth, then practice in that way; if you determine that it does not accord with the truth, then do not practice in that way. It is as simple as that. When you seek the truth, you should seek from many people. If anyone has something to say, you should listen to them, and treat all of their words seriously. Do not ignore or snub them, because this relates to matters within the scope of your duty and you must treat this seriously. This is the right attitude and the right state. When you are in the right state, and you do not reveal a disposition that is averse to the truth and hates the truth, then practicing in this way will supplant your corrupt**

**disposition. This is practicing the truth. If you practice the truth in this way, what fruits will it bear? (We will be guided by the Holy Spirit.) Receiving the guidance of the Holy Spirit is one aspect. Sometimes the matter will be very simple and can be achieved using your own mind; after others finish giving you their suggestions and you understand, you will be able to rectify things and act in accordance with the principles. People may think that this is a small matter, but to God it is a great matter. Why do I say this? Because, when you practice in this way, to God you are a person who can practice the truth, a person who loves the truth, and a person who is not averse to the truth—when God sees into your heart, He also sees your disposition, and this is a great matter. In other words, when you do your duty and act in the presence of God, what you live out and pour forth are all truth realities that people should possess. The attitudes, thoughts, and states that you possess in everything you do are the most important things for God, and they are what God scrutinizes”** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Only by Often Living Before God Can One Have a Normal Relationship With Him). God’s words pointed out a path of practice. When the brothers and sisters give suggestions or prune me, first I should have an attitude of acceptance and obedience. When I don’t know how to carry it out, I shouldn’t dislike or oppose it, but I should accept it first, then seek fellowship from someone who understands truth, then put it into practice once I have a proper handle on the principles. This is carrying out my duty according to God’s intention. I thought of how when others notice and point out problems or shortcomings in my work, when they give me suggestions and prune me, it’s entirely them being responsible for the work of the church, not singling me out or making things difficult for me. I should accept it from God and be obedient and reflect on my problems, and change and fix them in a timely

manner. That's the only way for my work to improve bit by bit, and to avoid having my corrupt disposition disrupt the church's work.

One day, Jennifer sent a message pointing out some issues with our videos. When I saw it, I felt opposed for a moment. I'd already discussed and addressed these issues with the others. Why was she bringing them up again? I wanted to say something in my defense, but when I stopped to think about it, if she pointed it out, there must still be oversights or shortcomings with the work. So, I took the initiative to ask Jennifer about it. After gaining an in-depth understanding, I finally realized I only discussed these issues with the brothers and sisters, but hadn't followed up on their work in a timely manner afterward, so these problems weren't fully resolved. I also realized that I wasn't being proactive and responsible toward my work, but I was just passively waiting for others to point out problems before resolving them. So, I took the initiative to ask the others what problems still existed in our videos, and fellowshipped and resolved them in a timely manner. After a period of time, it was clear there were fewer and fewer problems, and I felt at peace and relieved in my duty. I also felt in my heart that only by being able to take others' suggestions, seek the truth and solve my problems can I do my duty well. Thanks be to God!



## 28. Don't Let Jealousy Overtake You

By Li Fang, China

I was serving as a church leader in the summer of 2017. Due to the requirements of the work, the upper-level leader arranged for Sister Yang Guang and Sister Cheng Xin to work alongside me in taking charge of the church's work, and told me to help them out. After a while, I saw that these two sisters bore a burden in their duty and were making quick progress. I didn't need to worry about some things—the sisters were able to discuss them and handle them appropriately by themselves. At first, I was really happy about that, but over time, it started to leave a bad taste in my mouth. I thought to myself, "I'm the leader, so it stands to reason that church matters, whether they be big or small, should really be discussed with me first. But now, these two sisters are arranging some things without consulting me. They aren't taking me seriously! If this goes on, won't I be a leader in name only?"

At one gathering, the watering deacon mentioned Yang Guang and Cheng Xin. She said, "They really bear a burden in their duty. Before we were always short of waterers, but since they've arrived, not only are transfers being made fast, the watering work has also been pretty effective...." After hearing this, I outwardly gave thanks to God, but in my heart, I wasn't so pleased and I could feel my face burning. I thought to myself, "It seems that the others think more of those two sisters than they do of me. I've been a leader for several years, and those sisters have only been doing this for a few days. Are they better than me?" I didn't want to accept it, and I didn't hear anything the watering deacon said after that. I walked home limply after the gathering. That night I lay in bed, tossing and turning, unable to sleep. I felt really upset every time I thought about what

the watering deacon had said. I'd been a leader for years, but I didn't even match up to two sisters who'd just started training. What would the upper-level leader think of me if she knew? Would she say I was incompetent and not fit to be a leader? The others used to look up to me, would they think those sisters were better than me now? Would they support them instead of me in the future? I felt like Yang Guang and Cheng Xin had stolen my spotlight, and I was filled with jealousy and resentment toward them. My imagination was running wild during that time, fearing that my position wasn't secure. I silently encouraged myself to do a good job, to strive to do better in all our projects, and to make the others see that I wasn't second to those sisters at all. After that, I'd get up early and stay up late every day; I got ahead of all the important projects and quickly resolved any problems that came up, fearing the sisters would get there before me. Sometimes I even hoped they'd mess up and embarrass themselves. One day while checking the church's books, we found inconsistencies in the numbers sent out and received. The sisters had been handling the distribution and receipt of books, and while they anxiously hunted for the cause, not only did I not help, I reveled in their misfortune, thinking, "I thought you two were so capable—now what are you going to do?" In a reprimanding tone, I told them that it's a big deal if there's a problem with the church's books. That made them even more stressed and impacted their states. I was secretly feeling quite happy, "Let's see if the upper-level leader still thinks you're better than me now you've made such a big mistake! If you stay in this negative state, I won't need to worry about you threatening my position." At the time I felt a little guilty and realized that I was crossing a line, but I didn't really reflect on it more.

Later, Cheng Xin's duty was adjusted for some reasons, leaving me and Yang Guang working together. One day during a work discussion, I

noticed the upper-level leader was always asking for Yang Guang's opinion while I sat to one side feeling snubbed. I couldn't help but wonder if the leader might be focusing on training her because she was younger and had better caliber. I felt so disappointed. The leader had always discussed things with me before, but now she thought so highly of Yang Guang. Didn't that show that Yang Guang was better than me? My jealousy was coming out again. During that time, I scolded Yang Guang whenever I noticed deviations in her work and sometimes just gave her the cold shoulder. I rushed to preside over every gathering and resolve others' issues, not giving her a chance to fellowship. Her state got worse and worse and she no longer bore a burden for the church's work; she didn't handle some tasks promptly and this led to the church's work suffering some losses. At the time I did feel kind of guilty. I felt that I had a lot to do with her negative state, but I didn't reflect on myself. I didn't have any understanding of my own state until I was disciplined by God.

One day I suddenly felt sick and feverish, and then developed a cough. I thought my asthma was acting up again, but later, my cough got worse and worse and no medication was helping. No matter how much I wanted to, I couldn't fellowship in gatherings. I went to the doctor to get it checked out, and was told that I had severe bronchiectasis and tuberculosis. The doctor said that it was a very serious disease and that it takes more than a year of medication to get it under control. When I heard that I just sat there in shock, feeling really miserable. I'd had tuberculosis before and it had been really hard to cure it. How did it come back again, and why was it such a serious case this time? Since tuberculosis is contagious, I couldn't have any contact with the brothers and sisters. That meant I wouldn't be able to do my duty. In all my years of faith, I'd always done a duty. I'd even left my family and job behind to expend myself. Especially at that time, church

work was really busy and I was at the front of it all. Why did I get such a serious illness? What was God's intention? The more I thought about it, the worse I felt, and I often hid under my comforter crying. Once, I prayed to God, in tears, "God! I'm in so much pain. I don't know how to get through this. Please enlighten me to understand Your intention so that I can learn a lesson through this illness."

One day I read these words of God in my devotionals. God says: **"Normally, when you face a serious illness or strange malady that makes you suffer very badly, this does not happen by chance. Whether you are ill or in good health, God's intention is there in that"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. In Believing in God, Gaining the Truth Is Most Crucial). Pondering this, I realized that God allowing me to become seriously ill was no accident, that there was certainly God's intention in it. I had to seriously examine myself. I prayed and sought from God over and over. During my reflection, I suddenly realized that my constant jealousy of Yang Guang during this period of time, and my unwavering struggle for personal fame and gain had caused her to feel constrained and that this had impacted the church's work. When this occurred to me, I felt guilty and full of regret. I read this in God's words: **"Cruel mankind! The connivance and intrigue, the snatching and grabbing one from another, the scramble for fame and fortune, the mutual slaughter—when will it ever end? Despite the hundreds of thousands of words God has spoken, no one has come to their senses. People act for the sake of their families, sons and daughters, for their careers, future prospects, position, vainglory, and money, for the sake of food, clothing, and the flesh. But is there anyone whose actions are truly for the sake of God? Even among those who act for the sake of God, there are but few who know God. How many people do not act out of their own interests? How many do not**

**oppress or ostracize others in order to protect their own position?”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. The Evil Will Surely Be Punished). **“Some people always fear that others are better than they are or above them, that other people will be recognized while they get overlooked, and this leads them to attack and exclude others. Is this not a case of being envious of people with talent? Is that not selfish and despicable? What kind of disposition is this? It is maliciousness! Those who only think about their own interests, who only satisfy their own selfish desires, without thinking about others or considering the interests of God’s house, have a bad disposition, and God has no love for them”** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Freedom and Liberation Can Be Gained Only by Casting Off One’s Corrupt Disposition). What God revealed was precisely my state. Ever since I’d seen those two sisters doing their duty skillfully, progressing fast, and handling some things without consulting me, I’d become uncomfortable and thought that they weren’t respecting me. When the watering deacon had praised them for being effective in their duty, I’d felt even more like they were a threat to my position and had stolen my spotlight. To prove I was better than them and secure my position, I pushed ahead of them to fellowship and resolve others’ problems in gatherings and didn’t give them a chance to fellowship at all. When the numbers of church books didn’t add up, instead of helping them find the reason for it, I enjoyed their misery and made snide remarks, which led to them living in negativity. I was so malicious. At this thought, I felt guilty and regretful, and prayed to God in tears, “Oh God! It is by Your grace that I am able to supervise the church’s work, but I have been so rebellious. Not only have I failed to do my duty well and repay Your love, I’ve been jealous of those with more ability, and fought for personal fame and gain. My behavior has been disgusting and loathsome to You. God, I want to repent and change.”

After that, I read these words of God: **“When confronted with a problem, some people do seek an answer from others, but when the other person speaks according to the truth, they don’t accept it, they are not able to obey, and in their hearts, they think, ‘I’m normally better than him. If I listen to his suggestion this time, won’t it look like he’s superior to me? No, I can’t listen to him on this matter. I’ll just do it my way.’ Then they find a reason and an excuse to shoot down the other person’s point of view. What kind of disposition is it when a person sees someone who is better than them and they try to bring them down, spreading rumors about them, or employing despicable means to denigrate them and undermine their reputation—even trampling all over them—in order to protect their own place in people’s minds? This is not just arrogance and conceit, it is the disposition of Satan, it is a malicious disposition. That this person can attack and alienate people who are better and stronger than them is insidious and wicked. And that they will stop at nothing to bring people down shows that there is much of a devil in them! Living by the disposition of Satan, they are liable to belittle people, to try to stitch them up, to make things hard for them. Is this not evildoing? And living like this, they still think they’re okay, that they’re a good person—yet when they see someone better than them, they are liable to give them a hard time, to trample all over them. What is the issue here? Are people who are capable of committing such evil deeds not unscrupulous and willful? Such people only think of their own interests, they only consider their own feelings, and all they want is to achieve their own desires, ambitions, and aims. They don’t care how much damage they cause to the work of the church, and they would prefer to sacrifice the interests of the house of God to protect their status in people’s minds**

and their own reputation. Are people like this not arrogant and self-righteous, selfish and vile? Such people are not only arrogant and self-righteous, they are also extremely selfish and vile. They are not considerate of God's intentions at all. Do such people have God-fearing hearts? They do not have God-fearing hearts at all. This is why they act wantonly and do whatever they want, without any sense of blame, without any trepidation, without any apprehension or worry, and without considering the consequences. This is what they often do, and how they have always behaved. What is the nature of such behavior? To put it lightly, such people are far too jealous and have too strong a desire for personal reputation and status; they are too deceitful and insidious. To put it more harshly, the essence of the problem is that such people have no God-fearing heart at all. They are not frightened of God, they believe themselves to be of utmost importance, and they regard every aspect of themselves as being higher than God and higher than the truth. In their hearts, God is not worthy of mention and is insignificant, and God does not have any status in their hearts at all. Can those who have no place for God in their hearts, and who do not have God-fearing hearts, put the truth into practice? Absolutely not. So, when they typically go around merrily keeping themselves busy and exerting quite a lot of energy, what are they doing? Such people even claim to have abandoned everything to expend for God and suffered a great deal, but actually, the motive, principle, and objective of all their actions are for the sake of their own status and prestige, of protecting all of their interests. Would you or would you not say that this sort of person is terrible? What kind of people have believed in God for many years, yet have no God-fearing hearts? Are they not arrogant? Are they not Satans? And what things most lack a God-fearing heart? Apart

**from the beasts, it is the evil and the antichrists, the devils and Satan's ilk. They don't accept the truth at all; they are entirely without a God-fearing heart. They are capable of any evil; they are the enemies of God, and the enemies of His chosen people"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. The Five Conditions That Must Be Met to Embark on the Right Track of Belief in God). It felt like God was before me, judging me. I thought that after being a leader for many years, I should be superior and better than others, so I envied and rejected anyone more capable than me. I knew those two sisters had caliber, that they bore a burden and were effective in their duty—this was good for the church's work and for the brothers' and sisters' life entry. But I didn't consider any of that, I only cared about my own reputation and status. I battled with them in secret, looking for deviations and oversights in their work, to upset and embarrass them. This left them in a bad state and they no longer bore a burden in their duty, which also harmed the church's work. To maintain my own status, envious of those more talented than myself, I constrained those two sisters, who could do the actual work, to the point that they became negative. By doing that, I was disrupting the church's work and harming the interests of the church. I didn't have any humanity. Everything I was revealing was a satanic disposition. Satan can't stand to see people doing well, and is desperate for them to become negative, degenerate and betray God. I was acting as Satan's minion, disrupting the church's work. As a church leader, I should have been considering God's intentions, cultivating people for the church, so that my brothers and sisters could perform their duties. But instead, not only did I fail to cultivate talented people, I was jealous of them and oppressed them. How was that doing my duty? I was just doing evil and opposing God.



One day, I opened up to a sister and fellowshipped on my jealous state. She listened and then shared with me the example of Saul's jealousy of David. She said, "When Saul saw that God was using David to win wars and that the Israelites all supported him, he became jealous of David and kept trying to kill him. In the end Saul was spurned by God and punished." Hearing this sent a shiver through me. I thought about all of my recent behavior. When those two sisters were getting some results in their duty, I became jealous of them and constrained and suppressed them at every turn. I wasn't just giving them a hard time, I was making myself an enemy of God. Wasn't I just like Saul? Thinking about this, I felt a bit scared, and I realized that this was God's timely chastening and discipline stopping me in my evil-doing tracks. If I kept on acting that way, the consequences would be unthinkable. Later, I pondered over and over: Why, knowing full well that God doesn't like jealousy, could I not keep myself from doing things to sideline other people? I read a passage of God's words that said: **"One of the most obvious characteristics of the essence of an antichrist is that they monopolize power and run their own dictatorships: They do not listen to anyone, they do not respect anyone, and regardless of people's strengths, or what correct views or wise opinions they may express, or what suitable methods they might put forward, they pay them no heed; it is as if no one is qualified to cooperate with them, or to take part in anything they do. This is the kind of disposition antichrists have. Some people say this is being of bad humanity—but how could it be commonplace bad humanity? This is an entirely satanic disposition, and such a disposition is supremely vicious. Why do I say that their disposition is supremely vicious? Antichrists expropriate everything from the house of God and the property of the church, and treat them as their personal property, all of which is to be managed by them, and**

**they do not permit anyone else to intervene in this. The only things they think about when doing the work of the church are their own interests, their own status, and their own pride. They do not allow anyone to harm their interests, much less do they allow anyone of caliber or anyone who is able to speak of their experiential testimony to threaten their reputation and status. ... When someone distinguishes themselves with a little work, or when someone is able to speak of true experiential testimony, and God's chosen people receive benefits, edification, and support from it, and it earns great praise from everyone, envy and hate grows in the hearts of the antichrists, and they try to exclude and suppress that person. They do not, under any circumstances, allow such people to undertake any work, in order to prevent them from threatening their status. ... the antichrists think to themselves, 'There's no way I'm going to put up with this. You want to have a role in my domain, to compete with me. That's impossible; don't even think about it. You're more educated than me, more articulate than me, more popular than me, and you pursue the truth with greater diligence than I do. If I were to cooperate with you and you stole my thunder, what would I do then?' Do they consider the interests of the house of God? No. What do they think about? They think only of how to hold on to their own status. Though antichrists know themselves to be incapable of doing real work, they do not cultivate or promote people of good caliber who pursue the truth; the only people they promote are those who flatter them, those who are apt to worship others, who approve of and admire them in their hearts, those who are smooth operators, who have no understanding of the truth and are incapable of discernment"**

(The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Eight: They Would Have Others Submit Only to Them, Not the Truth or God (Part One)). God reveals that antichrists have no

consideration for the work of the church and just want to monopolize power. They bring the church under their control and won't let anyone else get involved. They exclude and oppress anyone who poses a threat to their status, and work vehemently to cover up the strengths and merits of others. I was acting just like an antichrist. To solidify my status, I kept wanting a monopoly on power and to be the only one calling the shots in the church. I was upholding ideas like, "There can only be one alpha male," and "In all the universe, only I reign supreme," and I wouldn't let anyone surpass me. When two sisters were handling some matters and didn't discuss them with me, I thought they weren't taking me seriously, and that I was a leader, after all, so church matters should be brought up with me first. When problems appeared in their duties, I criticized them by magnifying the issue and purposefully let them make fools of themselves. I would host gatherings myself, not giving these sisters a chance to fellowship. And I even said disparaging things about them behind their backs to make the supervisor think that they weren't keen on fellowshiping and there were always awkward silences at gatherings, that I was always the one playing host, as if all the credit belonged to me alone. My disposition was deceitful and vicious, and I was walking the path of an antichrist. At that point I realized that without God's chastening and discipline, and the judgment and revelation of His words, I would never have seen how serious the nature of my actions was. Not only had I suppressed and harmed the sisters I was partnered with, I had also committed transgressions and evil deeds. During that time, I felt extreme self-reproach and remorse. I hated myself for doing evil, regretted that I hadn't done my duty properly, and felt greatly indebted to God.

I read more of God's words after that: **"As a church leader, you do not merely need to learn to use the truth to resolve problems, you also**

**need to learn to discover and cultivate people of talent, whom you absolutely must not envy or suppress. Practicing in this way is beneficial to the work of the church. If you can cultivate a few pursuers of the truth to cooperate with you and do all the work well, and in the end, you all have experiential testimonies, then you are a qualified leader or worker. If you are able to handle everything according to the principles, then you are committing your loyalty. ... If you are truly capable of showing consideration for God's intentions, you will be able to treat other people fairly. If you recommend a good person and allow them to undergo training and perform a duty, thereby adding a person of talent to God's house, will that not make your work easier? Will you not then be showing loyalty in your duty? That is a good deed before God; it is the minimum conscience and reason that those who serve as leaders should possess"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days.

Freedom and Liberation Can Be Gained Only by Casting Off One's Corrupt Disposition). From God's words, I learned that leaders and workers have to focus on discovering and cultivating talented people. Suppressing them and being jealous of them for the sake of one's own interests disgusts God. I thought about the regrets I had from working with those two sisters, and made a resolution. No matter who I worked with in the future, I'd put the interests of the church first, I'd immediately recommend any talented people I discovered, and fulfill my responsibilities. Later, I revealed and dissected my corruption to the others at a gathering, and while working alongside everyone, I constantly reminded myself to cooperate with them, to learn from their strengths and to not do anything to disrupt the church's work.

After some time passed, I recovered a little from my illness, and the church arranged for me to do video production. Not long after that, the church asked me to give another sister some technical training. She had

good caliber and was a quick study. I thought, “If she learns all these techniques, will she take my place? Will the leader look down on me if she sees that this sister is a faster learner than me?” After thinking that, I didn’t want to be so diligent in training her. Then I realized I wasn’t in the right state, so I rushed to say a prayer, asking God to watch over my heart. I remembered something from God’s words: **“You should first think of the interests of God’s house, be considerate of God’s intentions, and consider the work of the church. Put these things first and foremost; only after that can you think about the stability of your status or how others regard you”** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Freedom and Liberation Can Be Gained Only by Casting Off One’s Corrupt Disposition). God’s words served as a timely reminder to me and I rebelled against my incorrect thoughts and did my best to train that sister. A few days later, she could make videos on her own. While working together, our duties became a bit more productive. After experiencing this, I realized that harmonious cooperation brings joy and peace to our hearts. Only by cooperating harmoniously are we likely to gain the enlightenment and guidance of the Holy Spirit and achieve good results in our duties. This change in me has been entirely achieved by God’s words. Thank God!

## 29. Why Am I Always Putting On an Act?

By Christine, the Philippines

In August 2021 I started training in the watering of new believers. Because I didn't have very standard English pronunciation, I was afraid that when I fellowshipped with them they would look down on me, so normally I would only communicate with them through typed messages. However, continuing this way impacted the progress of watering. During a gathering, a sister shared that her English wasn't great, but she wanted to be able to verbally fellowship with newcomers and address their various notions and difficulties in a timely manner, so she used translation software as an aid. That way she could fellowship with them in speech as much as possible. I felt ashamed when I compared that with my own attitude toward my duty. Although she couldn't speak English well, she was still able to find a way to communicate orally with newcomers. My only problem was that I didn't have standard pronunciation. I was fine in day-to-day conversation, but I was afraid newcomers would say my English was bad and therefore I wasn't willing to communicate orally with them. This had a direct impact on the outcome of my watering. There were more and more new believers accepting God's work of the last days, so we needed to step up our watering work and help them establish a foundation on the true way as soon as possible. But I was just considering my own reputation and status, not how to water newcomers promptly. I didn't remotely consider God's intentions! So I said a prayer, ready to lean on God and try communicating orally with newcomers. I started practicing my spoken English after that, starting out with newcomers that I already knew. After a little while, I didn't feel so afraid of having spoken conversations. I remember once I was having a conversation with a new believer, and not only could I express myself

fluently, but his issue was resolved. It's hard to believe—I never would have thought that one single verbal discussion could be more effective than several days of messaging.

As more and more new members joined the church, the leader had Sister Mavis and I partner up to take charge of the watering work. When I heard about this arrangement I was really surprised. I had just started practicing watering newcomers, there were still a lot of truths about God's work that I didn't understand, and my level of English was average. How could I take on that kind of responsibility? Mavis had been watering newcomers longer than me, so she had more experience in every way. She also spoke English pretty well. If I paired up with her, considering my actual capabilities, wouldn't the truth be exposed the moment I opened my mouth? She might say that my fellowship on the truth wasn't clear, that I wasn't a good fit for that duty. Just as I was fretting over that, Mavis came to discuss the work with me and asked me how my English was. Without a second thought, I said, "My English isn't any good. I can understand it, but I can't speak very well. My written communication is okay." She responded, "Then you can be responsible for arranging gathering times with new believers, and I'll be responsible for fellowshipping with them. We can work together." After hearing Mavis say this, I thought that saying I couldn't speak English very well was a great excuse, and that in gatherings I wouldn't have to say anything. As long as I kept quiet, my faults and shortcomings would never become apparent. Then when Mavis was watering newcomers, I could be there listening and learning, and after a while, once I got a handle on things, I could communicate verbally with them. This way they wouldn't see through me.

The first time Mavis and I watered newcomers together, I noticed that she was interacting with them in fluent English, but besides "Hello!" I

didn't dare say anything else. We had agreed that when the gathering was over, I'd talk to the new believers to get a sense of their issues and struggles to resolve them as soon as possible, but I was feeling reluctant. In their first interaction with Mavis, they'd seen how good her English was and that she could clearly fellowship on the truth. If they spoke to me after that and heard me stumbling over my words, they'd realize what a stark difference it was. What would they think of me then? I thought about it over and over again, and decided to keep on typing messages. After that, aside from engaging orally with the few newcomers that I was quite familiar with, I interacted with the other newcomers through typed messages. However, that was a slower way to communicate. Quite often I would send a newcomer a message and they wouldn't be online, and then when they did respond, I didn't notice. Some issues that could be resolved orally within just a few minutes, were not necessarily solved in even a couple of days through typed messages. It wasn't until we reviewed the work we'd done that I saw that nearly half of the new believers I was responsible for weren't attending gatherings normally. I was stunned. How could that be happening? Mavis asked me, "Why are you always messaging new believers? Why don't you ever speak with them directly?" I hemmed and hawed, not wanting to tell her. I knew if I had spoken with them directly to resolve their problems and difficulties, some of them would have started attending gatherings normally. But I was afraid of showing my weaknesses and was relying on messaging, which was what led to this consequence.

That night I was tossing and turning, and I couldn't sleep. The more I thought about it, the worse I felt. If new believers' confusions and various notions weren't resolved right away, they could pull back at any time. That was a serious dereliction of duty! Why did I insist on messaging about something that could be resolved with three minutes of conversation? It



wasn't that I couldn't speak English. I'd been able to communicate orally not long ago, so why wasn't I doing that anymore? Thinking about how some newcomers weren't attending gatherings normally because I hadn't watered them properly made me want to kick myself. I was so upset that I prayed to God, asking Him to guide me in understanding myself. Then, I read this passage in God's words: **"People themselves are created beings. Can created beings achieve omnipotence? Can they achieve perfection and flawlessness? Can they achieve proficiency in everything, come to understand everything, see through everything, and be capable of everything? They cannot. However, within humans, there are corrupt dispositions, and a fatal weakness: As soon as they learn a skill or profession, people feel that they are capable, that they are people with status and worth, and that they are professionals. No matter how unexceptional they are, they all want to package themselves as some famous or exceptional individual, to turn themselves into some minor celebrity, and make people think they are perfect and flawless, without a single defect; in the eyes of others, they wish to become famous, powerful, or some great figure, and they want to become mighty, capable of anything, with nothing they cannot do. They feel that if they sought others' help, they would appear incapable, weak, and inferior, and that people would look down on them. For this reason, they always want to keep up a front. Some people, when asked to do something, say they know how to do it, when they actually do not. Afterward, in secret, they look it up and try to learn how to do it, but after studying it for several days, they still do not understand how to do it. When asked how they are getting on with it, they say, 'Soon, soon!' But in their hearts, they're thinking, 'I'm not there yet, I have no idea, I don't know what to do! I must not let the cat out of the bag, I must continue putting on a**

**front, I can't let people see my shortcomings and ignorance, I can't let them look down on me!' What problem is this? This is a living hell of trying to save face at all costs. What kind of disposition is this? Such people's arrogance knows no bounds, they have lost all reason. They do not wish to be like everyone else, they don't want to be ordinary people, normal people, but superhumans, exceptional individuals, or hotshots. This is such a huge problem! With regard to the weaknesses, shortcomings, ignorance, foolishness, and lack of understanding within normal humanity, they will wrap it all up, and not let other people see it, and then keep on disguising themselves. ... do such people not live with their heads in the clouds? Are they not dreaming? They do not know who they themselves are, nor do they know how to live out normal humanity. They have never once acted like practical human beings. If you pass your days with your head in the clouds, muddling through, not doing anything with your feet on the ground, always living by your own imagination, then this is trouble. The path in life you choose is not right''** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. The Five Conditions That Must Be Met to Embark on the Right Track of Belief in God). Thinking over God's words, I could see that I'd been putting on an act and disguising myself. I was afraid the new believers would look down on me because my spoken English wasn't great, so I didn't dare engage in conversation with them. After Mavis and I started working together, I saw that her English was really good and her fellowship on the truth was clearer than mine. I was worried that my brothers and sisters would see me as disappointing in comparison, and scared that Mavis would see through me, so I put on even more of an act. When Mavis asked me how my English was, I intentionally said it was no good, finding an excuse to not have to fellowship verbally. Whenever the two of us were doing watering together I wouldn't speak up.

I wasn't fulfilling my own duty. When I was watering newcomers, I messaged them instead of having direct conversations, which meant that a lot of newcomers' issues weren't resolved as soon as they should have been, so their negativity remained and they didn't attend gatherings. I was holding up our work. I was always disguising myself, afraid that my weaknesses would be revealed. I wanted to learn things behind the scenes and then come back and amaze everyone. How arrogant of me! I couldn't properly face my defects and shortcomings, but wanted to appear to be outstanding and different from everyone else. It's just like something that God revealed: **"They do not wish to be like everyone else, they don't want to be ordinary people, normal people, but superhumans, exceptional individuals, or hotshots. This is such a huge problem!"** My English-speaking skills weren't great, and I had been watering new believers for a short time. I didn't have much experience in watering work. The church arranged for me to water foreign newcomers and this gave me a great chance to practice which I should have cherished. But instead of doing my duty well, I always wanted to cover up my flaws and act like I could do anything so that others would look up to me and admire me. I didn't have any reason or self-awareness at all. I knew I had to stop putting on an act and disguising myself. No matter what others thought, I had to let go of my vanity, to carry out my duty and my responsibilities. That was what I had to put into practice.

I read a couple more passages of God's words that gave me a path of practice. Almighty God says: **"You must seek the truth to resolve any problem that arises, no matter what it is, and by no means disguise yourself or put on a false face for others. Your shortcomings, your deficiencies, your faults, your corrupt dispositions—be completely open about them all, and fellowship about them all. Do not keep them inside.**

**Learning how to open yourself up is the first step toward life entry, and it is the first hurdle, which is the most difficult to overcome. Once you have overcome it, entering the truth is easy. What does taking this step signify? It means that you are opening your heart and showing everything you have, good or bad, positive or negative; baring yourself for others and for God to see; hiding nothing from God, concealing nothing, disguising nothing, free of deceit and trickery, and being likewise open and honest with other people. In this way, you live in the light, and not only will God scrutinize you, but other people will also be able to see that you act with principle and a degree of transparency”**

(The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Part Three). **“In the presence of God, no matter how you disguise yourself, how you conceal yourself, or what you fabricate for yourself, God has a clear grasp of all your truest thoughts and the things hidden in your deepest, innermost parts; there is not one person whose hidden, inner things can escape God’s scrutiny”** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Six Indicators of Life Growth).

Pondering God’s words, I realized that the first step to resolving my corrupt disposition was learning to open up, stop putting on an act and pretending, and to bring my inadequacies, faults, and corruption I revealed to light. I had to be a simple, honest, and down-to-earth person before my brothers and sisters and before God. Then I’d be able to relax and be free in my duty. Understanding this gave me the confidence and courage to put the truth into practice, and so I sought out the leader and Mavis, and told them openly about my state and understanding. They didn’t look down on me, but patiently fellowshiped with me on their own experiences to help me to understand my issue. When I watered newcomers after that, I was no longer constrained by my vanity. I started focusing on my verbal communication with them so I could help resolve their confusions more quickly. When I

found a word that I didn't know or couldn't pronounce, I'd grab a dictionary or use translation software. Over time, my spoken English improved. I felt that by openly fellowshiping with my brothers and sisters and not disguising myself or being fake, I could learn about my corruption and faults and quickly turn around my bad state. Just as God says: **“Learning how to open yourself up is the first step toward life entry, and it is the first hurdle, which is the most difficult to overcome. Once you have overcome it, entering the truth is easy”** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Part Three). I thought that after going through all this I had become able to open up and change. However, afterward I was exposed by another situation again.

One time, a few new believers wanted to share the gospel with some family members and friends, so the team leader and I explained the principles of doing so to them. I'd just finished introducing myself when one of the new believers said that she couldn't understand what I was saying. The team leader hurriedly helped to explain, saying my English pronunciation wasn't good, and then began speaking with the newcomers. I felt like an outsider as I listened to them conversing fluently—I could feel my face growing red. It was really embarrassing. Originally, I wanted the team leader to have the chance to learn from me and get some practice, but I couldn't even introduce myself properly—what would the team leader and those newcomers think of me? Would they think my English was terrible so I must be incompetent in work as well? Who would listen to me after that when I was following up on things? These thoughts left me with an indescribable feeling of failure, and I felt really despondent. At that time, the church leader was also a member of the group. I was afraid she'd come online, see what was happening, think that my English was poor and that I couldn't get the work done, and then dismiss me. I didn't want them to

figure me out, so I started hiding my shortcomings again, communicating via typed messages instead of orally, and turning the group discussion into one-on-one private chats. After some time, I started feeling really exhausted. I was afraid everyone would find out the truth of the matter and look down on me. I lived every day in that state and didn't have any time or energy to think about how to do my duty well. I felt more and more darkness in my heart and couldn't feel God's guidance at all. I didn't have any direction in my duty, either. I knew I was in a dangerous state, but I couldn't get over it. So, I said a prayer in my heart, asking God to guide me out of it.

One day I watched a testimonial video called Behind the Pretense, and some of God's words that appeared in it left a deep impression on me. Almighty God says: **"What kind of disposition is it when people always put up a front, always whitewash themselves, always put on airs so that others think highly of them, and cannot see their faults or shortcomings, when they always try to present their best side to people? This is arrogance, fakery, hypocrisy, it is the disposition of Satan, it is something wicked. Take members of the satanic regime: No matter how much they fight, feud, or kill in the dark, no one is allowed to report or expose them. They are afraid that people will see their demonic face, and they do everything they can to cover it up. In public, they do their utmost to whitewash themselves, saying how much they love the people, how great, glorious and infallible they are. This is the nature of Satan. The most prominent feature of Satan's nature is trickery and deception. And what is the aim of this trickery and deception? To hoodwink people, to stop them from seeing its essence and true colors, and thus achieve the aim of prolonging its rule. Ordinary people may lack such power and status, but they, too, wish to make others hold a**

favorable view of them, and for people to have a high estimation of them, and elevate them to a high status in their hearts. This is a corrupt disposition, and if people do not understand the truth, they are incapable of recognizing this. ... Making mistakes or disguising oneself: which of these relates to disposition? Disguising is a matter of disposition, it involves an arrogant disposition, wickedness, and deceitfulness; it is especially loathed by God. ... If you do not try to put on a pretense or justify yourself, if you can admit your mistakes, everyone will say you are honest and wise. And what makes you wise? Everyone makes mistakes. Everyone has faults and flaws. And actually, everyone has the same corrupt disposition. Do not think yourself more noble, perfect, and kind than others; that is being utterly unreasonable. Once people's corrupt dispositions and the essence and true face of their corruption are clear to you, you will not try to cover up your own mistakes, nor will you hold other people's mistakes against them—you will be able to face both correctly. Only then will you become insightful and not do foolish things, which will make you wise. Those who are not wise are foolish people, and they always dwell on their minor mistakes while sneaking around behind the scenes. It is disgusting to witness. In fact, what you are doing is immediately obvious to other people, yet you are still blatantly putting on a show. To others, it has the appearance of a clownish performance. Is this not foolish? It really is. Foolish people do not have any wisdom. No matter how many sermons they hear, they still do not understand the truth or see anything for what it really is. They never get off their high horse, thinking they are different from everyone else and more respectable; this is arrogance and self-righteousness, this is foolishness. Fools do not have spiritual understanding, do they? The matters in which you are foolish and

**unwise are the matters in which you have no spiritual understanding, and cannot easily understand the truth. This is the reality of the matter”** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. The Principles That Should Guide One’s Conduct). I gave some thought to God’s words—this was a real jolt for me. Putting up a front and making a mistake are different in nature. My English wasn’t good, so when I made a mistake, I could learn and practice. But I always disguised myself so that others couldn’t see my real self. Hidden behind that were my corrupt dispositions of arrogance, deceitfulness, and evil. That’s disgusting and odious to God. I was still practicing how to do that duty, so errors, oversights, and expressions of corruption were unavoidable. Those weren’t things to feel embarrassed about, and could be resolved by seeking the truth. But ever since I’d taken on the responsibility of watering work, I’d put myself in the position of someone in charge, thinking I had to be better than a regular person, otherwise the newcomers would look down on me. When that new believer said she couldn’t understand what I was saying, I felt like my inadequacies had been exposed and my image damaged, and that the new believers would look down on me and wouldn’t listen to me. I was even more concerned that the leader would see what I was lacking and think I was not up to the job, and then dismiss me. I thought of a way to conceal my faults to protect my status and image, even going so far as to hold up the church’s work. I replaced verbal communication with written exchanges, and used private chats in place of group meetings for discussing the work, which delayed our watering work. I was in a state of defensiveness and growing more and more distant from God. It was all very deceitful of me! Reading the part in God’s words judging and exposing a satanic nature made me tremble. God says that the most prominent aspect of a satanic nature is trickery and deception, that that’s particularly wicked. The great red dragon



is especially good at putting up a false front and at deception. It's always talking up its "great, glorious, and correct" image to get people to worship and follow it, all in an effort to secure its dictatorship. It does everything to conceal all the evil things it does behind the scenes, thus misleading and deceiving the people of the world. Reflecting on my behavior, I saw that I was putting up a false front so that others would have a positive image of me and only see my good side. I was showing a deceitful and wicked disposition! Wasn't this disposition the same as that of the great red dragon? What's the good of winning others' respect and admiration through deception and putting up a front? By hiding my shortcomings and inadequacies, by playing tricks to cheat God and other people, I not only didn't make any progress, but also delayed the work of watering newcomers. Wasn't that foolish? A lot of new believers were reading God's words and learning about His intention to save mankind. They could see disasters growing and the pandemic getting worse and worse, and they knew that accepting God's work of the last days is the only path of survival for people. They were willing to share the gospel with their friends and family, to bring them before God so they can gain God's salvation. But I wasn't remotely concerned about their life entry. To maintain my own worthless vanity, I wasn't promptly addressing brothers' and sisters' questions about sharing the gospel. That delayed so many people from investigating the true way and turning toward God. Didn't that make me an obstacle, a stumbling block to the work of the gospel? As I reflected on this, I realized that I'd been living by my corrupt disposition, and though I appeared to be doing my duty, I was actually resisting God, holding up the work of the church, and doing harm to the brothers and sisters. I hated myself and was nauseated with myself from the bottom of my heart. I felt that I owed God so much and I'd let down my brothers and sisters, as well.

I prayed to God that I was ready to repent, and that I wanted to steadfastly pursue the truth and do my duty.

One time in my spiritual devotionals I read this passage of God's words: **"You do not need to use any methods to protect your reputation, image, and status, nor do you need to cover up or disguise your mistakes. You do not need to engage in these useless efforts. If you can let these things go, you will be very relaxed, you will live without constraints or pain, and you will live entirely in the light. Learning how to be open when you fellowship is the first step to life entry. Next, you need to learn to dissect your thoughts and actions to see which are wrong and which God does not like, and you need to reverse them immediately and rectify them. What is the purpose of rectifying them? It is to accept and take on board the truth, while getting rid of the things within you that belong to Satan and replacing them with the truth. Before, you did everything according to your deceitful disposition which is lying and deceptive; you felt that you could get nothing done without lying. Now that you understand the truth, and loathe Satan's ways of doing things, you no longer act that way, you act with a mentality of honesty, purity, and submission. If you hold nothing back, if you do not put on a front, a pretense, or cover things up, if you lay yourself bare to the brothers and sisters, do not hide your innermost ideas and thoughts, but instead allow others to see your honest attitude, then the truth will gradually take root in you, it will blossom and bear fruit, it will yield results, little-by-little. If your heart is increasingly honest, and increasingly oriented toward God, and if you know to protect the interests of God's house when you perform your duty, and your conscience is troubled when you fail to protect these interests, then this is proof that the truth has had an effect in you,**

**and has become your life”** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Part Three). God’s words gave me a specific path of practice. I had to do my duty with a pure, honest heart, and no matter how great or small my stature was, or what defects and shortcomings I had, I couldn’t put on an act. I had to show my true self to everyone, and to open up about myself even if I made a mistake. Living this way wouldn’t be tiring, and God approves of it. In fact, my problems and shortcomings wouldn’t go away just because I tried to hide them, so I should face them calmly, acknowledge what I lacked, and be a person who could lay myself bare and open up. If I didn’t understand something, I had to ask questions and learn more so that I could gradually improve in my work. Additionally, the leader arranging for me to be in charge should be a responsibility I accept from God, not a status. I needed to let go of the identity of someone in charge and put my duty first. No matter what other people thought or said, I had to correct my motives, know my own place, and do the duty of a created being.

From then on, I would let go of my pride and actively seek out newcomers for verbal communication to help take care of the difficulties and issues they were having in their duties. I also practiced my English conversational skills more and worked on my pronunciation, and when I ran into things I didn’t understand, I’d ask other brothers and sisters and learn from their strengths. Once, when I was participating in an online gathering with a few new believers, just as we were beginning to greet each other, I found myself stuck on one of their names. The new believer corrected my pronunciation repeatedly. I was feeling kind of embarrassed, and wondering why she was taking it so seriously. It’s fine just to correct it once, with all those people listening! Then I remembered something God says: **“You do not need to use any methods to protect your reputation, image, and status, nor do you need to cover up or disguise your mistakes. You do**

**not need to engage in these useless efforts. If you can let these things go, you will be very relaxed, you will live without constraints or pain, and you will live entirely in the light”** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Part Three). I thought to myself, “It’s true—when I’m wrong, I’m wrong. Why do I always have to hide it? Instead of keeping my mind on my duty, I am keeping it on my vanity, and there is no way to do my duty well carrying that kind of burden.” So, I calmed myself and said a prayer, asking God to guide me to let go of my pride and stay focused on my duty. After praying, I didn’t feel embarrassed anymore, and I didn’t feel so constrained by my non-standard pronunciation. I asked the newcomer to help me correct my pronunciation. A while later, a sister who had been partnered with me before said, “What do you normally do to practice your English? You communicate really smoothly with the new believers. You’ve made so much progress in the months since we last saw each other!” Hearing this really touched me, and I knew it was entirely God’s guidance and grace. The more I have these kinds of experiences, the more I feel that opening up about my true state, not disguising or covering up myself, and steadfastly doing my duty is a practice that puts my heart at peace. Thanks be to God!

## **30. Is Amiability an Apt Criterion for Good Humanity?**

By Frank, the Philippines

When I was little, people always said I was sensible and well-behaved; in short, a good kid. I rarely got angry at others and never caused any trouble. After entering the faith, I was also quite amiable with the other brothers and sisters. I was tolerant, patient and loving. I remember a period when I was teaching some older members how to use computers. I patiently taught them again and again. Even though sometimes they would be slow to learn and I'd get a bit agitated, I would try hard not to show impatience, out of fear that others would say I lacked loving kindness. As a result, brothers and sisters often said I had good humanity, and my leader chose me to water newcomers, saying that only people with kindness and patience could do that duty well. I felt very self-satisfied when I heard that, and was even more sure that being amiable and kind was a sign of good humanity.

Later on, Brother Li Ming and I were partnered as leaders in the church. After working together for some time, I noticed that Li Ming wanted to do things his own way, and he had a bit of a temper. If things didn't go his way, he would often become angry. Also, he wasn't transparent in his work and would often be deceptive. He didn't act according to principles and didn't protect the church's work. For a period of time, he kept using her cell phone to contact brothers and sisters. I knew that this could allow the police to monitor them and could make trouble for the church, and I thought about stopping him several times, but just as I was about to speak up, I'd hold back. I felt that if I pointed out his problem directly, he might think that even though I acted like a nice person outwardly, I was rather merciless in my words and actions, and thus hard to

get along with. After thinking it over, I decided to compromise and simply ask him if he was or wasn't using his cell phone to contact other brothers and sisters. When he wouldn't admit he was, I knew he was lying, but I didn't expose him and stop him, fearing that it would drive a rift between us and make him think less of me. Later on, I noticed Li Ming's problems were getting more and more serious. One time, some brothers and sisters told me that his wife always spoke words and doctrines to show off during gatherings, didn't resolve actual issues, and told others about how much she'd suffered and sacrificed in her duty just to make them admire her. After an investigation, it was determined she wasn't suited to be a leader and should be dismissed. When I told Li Ming about this, he became very irritated, saying that the brothers and sisters' evaluation was false, and unfair to his wife. He even questioned why we didn't investigate those who reported the issue, and only investigated his wife. I was shocked—I never imagined Li Ming would have such a poor attitude. To try to smooth things over, I told him, "Quiet your heart and seek God's intention in this matter. Try not to let your emotions get the best of you." But he didn't listen to me at all and just wouldn't let up. Due to Li Ming's willful obstruction, his wife's problem was left unsolved. After that, Li Ming also reprimanded the brothers and sisters during a gathering and even drove one sister to tears with his lecturing. I felt that Li Ming's problem was getting very serious. The others had objectively and fairly evaluated his wife, only bringing up facts, but because this threatened his interests, he got angry and lashed out at them. He had evil humanity! I wanted to report his problem to our upper leader, but then I thought: "Isn't that just being a tattletale and stabbing him in the back? Also, that leader will definitely call him in for fellowship if I report him—if he finds out that I was the one that reported him, what will he think of me? Won't he say that I was disparaging him behind his back

and that I have poor humanity?” Realizing this, I refrained from reporting him, but I felt a bit repressed and agonized.

Later on, because other people reported his problem, Li Ming was finally dismissed. In the aftermath, the upper leader exposed me, saying: “While on the surface it seems like you get along well with everyone, you have no real loyalty toward God. Why didn’t you expose and stop Li Ming when you noticed his problem? How could you not report such a crucial issue? Do you want to protect the church’s work or not?” Only after being pruned by my leader did I wake up and start praying to God and reflecting. I came across a passage of God’s words that says: **“There must be a standard for having good humanity. It does not involve taking the path of moderation, not sticking to principles, endeavoring not to offend anyone, currying favor everywhere you go, being smooth and slick with everyone you meet, and making everyone speak well of you. This is not the standard. So, what is the standard? It is being able to submit to God and the truth. It is approaching one’s duty and all manner of people, events, and things with principles and a sense of responsibility. This is plain for all to see; everyone is clear about this in their heart. Moreover, God scrutinizes people’s hearts and knows their situation, each and every one; no matter who they are, no one can fool God. Some people always boast that they possess good humanity, that they never speak ill of others, never harm anyone else’s interests, and they claim never to have coveted other people’s property. When there is a dispute over interests, they even prefer to suffer loss than take advantage of others, and everyone else thinks they are good people. However, when performing their duties in God’s house, they are wily and slippery, always scheming for themselves. Never do they think of the interests of God’s house, never do they treat as urgent the things God treats as**

**urgent or think as God thinks, and never can they set aside their own interests so as to perform their duties. They never forsake their own interests. Even when they see evil people committing evil, they do not expose them; they have no principles whatsoever. What kind of humanity is this? It is not good humanity. Pay no attention to what such people say; you must see what they live out, what they reveal, and what their attitude is when they perform their duties, as well as what their internal state is and what they love. If their love of their own fame and gain exceeds their loyalty to God, if their love of their own fame and gain exceeds the interests of God's house, or if their love of their own fame and gain exceeds the consideration they show for God, then are such people possessed of humanity? They are not people with humanity"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. In Giving One's Heart to God, One Can Obtain the Truth). Through God's words, I realized that a person's humanity cannot be judged based on outward characteristics like whether they have a mild temper, or whether they can get along with others harmoniously, but rather on their attitude toward God and the truth, whether they are responsible in their duty, and whether they stand with God and act according to the truth principles when facing issues. In the past, I thought I had decent humanity. I was outwardly kind and had a nice personality, but when I noticed Li Ming using his cell phone to contact brothers and sisters, which compromised the church's safety, I worried that calling him out directly might ruin our relationship, and so I just gave him a tactful, subtle reminder. When he didn't admit to his behavior, I didn't expose or stop him. I thought to myself, "If something goes wrong, he can't say I didn't remind him." I thought that practicing this way wouldn't damage my image and absolved me of responsibility if something went wrong. I was only thinking about my own interests, status and image, while paying no mind to the



church's work or the brothers' and sisters' safety. I was so selfish and deceitful! When I saw how Li Ming, out of affection for his wife, lashed out at the others over the issue with his wife, I should have reported this to our upper leader right away, but I worried he'd think I was backstabbing him, so I remained silent. I stood back and let Li Ming run amok, which negatively impacted the church's work, and brought attacks and harm to the brothers and sisters. Where was my humanity? Considering my actions in light of God's words of judgment and exposure, I felt very guilty. I always thought I had good humanity, but through the revelation of God's words and being exposed through facts, my self-perception completely changed. Outwardly, I was kind, but behind that kindness was a despicable intention. I only cared about my personal interests and didn't protect the church's work at all. I dealt in fake kindness and tried to please everyone. I was a falsely pious and deceitful person. I no longer dared portray myself as someone with good humanity. Later on, I came across another passage of God's words: **"The essence behind good behavior such as being approachable and amiable can be described in one word: pretense. Such good behavior is not born of the words of God, nor as a result of practicing the truth or acting according to principle. What is it produced by? It comes from people's motives, schemes, from them pretending, putting on an act, being deceitful. When people cling to these good behaviors, the aim is to get the things they want; if not, they would never aggrieve themselves in this way, and live contrary to their own desires. What does it mean, to live contrary to their own desires? It is that their true nature is not as well-behaved, guileless, gentle, kind, and virtuous as people imagine. They do not live by conscience and sense; instead, they live in order to achieve a certain aim or demand. What is man's true nature? It is muddleheaded and ignorant. Without**

the laws and commandments bestowed by God, people would have no idea what sin is. Is this not what mankind used to be like? Only when God issued the laws and commandments did people have some concept of sin. But still they had no concept of right and wrong, or of positive and negative things. And how, with this being the case, could they be aware of the correct principles for speaking and acting? Could they know which ways of acting, which good behaviors, ought to be found in normal humanity? Could they know what produces truly good behavior, what kind of way they should follow to live out a human likeness? They could not. Because of people's satanic nature, because of their instincts, they could only pretend and put on an act to live decently, and with dignity—which is what gave rise to deceits such as being well-educated and sensible, gentle and refined, courteous, respecting the old and caring for the young, and being amiable and approachable; thus emerged these tricks and techniques of deception. And once they emerged, people selectively clung to one or several of these deceits. Some chose to be amiable and approachable, some chose to be well-educated and sensible, gentle and refined, some chose to be courteous, to respect the old and care for the young, some chose to be all of these things. And yet I define people with such good behaviors with one term. What is that term? 'Smooth stones.' What are smooth stones? It is those smooth stones in rivers that have been scoured and polished of any sharp edges by long years of passing water. And though they may not hurt to step on, without care people can slip on them. In appearance and shape, these stones are very beautiful, but once you have taken them home, they are quite useless. You can't bear to throw them away, but there is no point in keeping them, either—which is what a 'smooth stone' is. To Me, people with these apparently good

**behaviors are tepid. They pretend to be good on the outside, but do not accept the truth at all, they say nice-sounding things, but don't do anything real. They are nothing but smooth stones. If you fellowship with them on the truth and the principles, they'll talk to you about being gentle and refined, and courteous. If you speak to them about discerning antichrists, they'll talk to you about respecting the old and caring for the young, and being well-educated and sensible. If you tell them that there must be principles to one's comportment, that one must seek the principles in their duty and not act willfully, what will their attitude be? They'll say, 'Acting in accordance with the truth principles is another matter. I just want to be well-educated and sensible, and for others to approve of my actions. As long as I respect the old and care for the young, and have other people's approval, that's enough.' They only care about good behaviors, they do not focus on the truth''** (The Word, Vol. 6. On the Pursuit of the Truth I. What It Means to Pursue the Truth (3)).

Through God's words, I realized that being amiable and approachable, behaviors deemed good in traditional culture, are in essence just a pretense. Those who act like this are just packaging themselves, putting on a false front to gain people's admiration and deceive them into respecting and praising them. It's all conspiracy and trickery, and acting this way makes them a fraud. I also realized that the reason I was still so selfish and deceitful, despite pursuing to have good behavior all these years, was because there were evil intentions behind all of this. I wanted to make a good impression on people so they would respect and praise me. I had been conditioned and educated by traditional culture from an early age to value good conduct. I thought that having good conduct would earn me the praise of people around me. After entering the faith, I continued to try to be an amiable and approachable person and maintain a good image and status

among the brothers and sisters, especially when I was partnered with Li Ming. I noticed that he used his phone to contact brothers and sisters several times, violating principles, endangering brothers and sisters, and ignoring the church's interests, and I should have exposed and stopped him, but I worried that he'd form a bad impression of me so I just let it slide. I clearly saw that Li Ming was protecting his wife and even suppressed the brothers and sisters, and that this was not just a simple case of corruption—his humanity was evil, he wasn't a suitable leader, and he should have been reported right away. But instead I chose to remain silent once again to protect my status and image. To protect my image, I bit the hand that fed me. I didn't protect the church's interests at all. I became profoundly aware of how seeking to be amiable and approachable not only didn't help me change my corrupt disposition, it actually made me more and more selfish and deceitful. I aimed for good behavior instead of practicing the truth, projecting a false image to hide my despicable intentions and make everyone think that I had the truth reality and that I was loving and kind, fooling them into trusting me and giving me their respect and approval. I was on the path of the falsely pious Pharisees and was resisting God. I would be condemned and eliminated by God if I continued on like that.

Later on, I read another two passages of God's words that said: **“And what is the consequence when people always think of their own self-interest, when they are always trying to protect their own pride and vanity, when they reveal a corrupt disposition yet do not seek the truth to fix it? It is that they have no life entry, it is that they lack true experiential testimony. And this is dangerous, is it not? If you never practice the truth, if you have no experiential testimony, then in due course you will be revealed and eliminated. What use do people without experiential testimony have in the house of God? They are bound to do**

**any duty poorly, and be unable to do anything properly. Are they not just garbage? If people never practice the truth after years of believing in God, they are disbelievers; they are evil people. If you never practice the truth, and if your transgressions grow ever more numerous, then your outcome is set. It is clear to see that all your transgressions, the mistaken path you walk, and your refusal to repent all add up to a multitude of evil deeds; and so your outcome is that you will go to hell—you will be punished. Do you think this is a trivial matter? If you have not been punished, you will have no sense of how terrifying this is. When the day comes where you really do face calamity, and you are faced with death, it will be too late for regrets. If, in your faith in God, you do not accept the truth, and if you have believed in God for years but there has been no change in you, the ultimate consequence is that you will be eliminated and abandoned” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Part Three). “Only when people act and comport themselves according to God’s words do they have a true foundation. If they do not comport themselves according to God’s words, and only focus on pretending to behave well, can they become good people as a result? Absolutely not. Good doctrines and behavior cannot change man’s corrupt dispositions, and they cannot change his essence. Only the truth and the words of God can change people’s corrupt dispositions, thoughts, and opinions, and become their life. ... What should the basis of people’s speech and actions be? God’s words. So, what are the requirements and standards God has for people’s speech and actions? (That they be constructive to people.) That is right. Most fundamentally, you must tell the truth, speak honestly, and benefit others. At the very least, your speech must edify people, and not trick, mislead, make fun of, satirize, deride, mock, constrict them, expose their weaknesses, or**

**hurt them. This is the expression of normal humanity. It is humanity's virtue. ... Also, in some special instances, it becomes necessary to directly expose other people's errors and prune them, so that they gain knowledge of the truth and desire to repent. Only then is the due effect achieved. This way of practicing is of great benefit to people. It is a real help to them, and it is constructive for them, is it not?"** (The Word, Vol. 6. On

the Pursuit of the Truth I. What It Means to Pursue the Truth (3)). I was alarmed by God's words, and I felt afraid. If someone chooses to uphold their own interests in situation after situation and never practices the truth, they will accumulate more and more transgressions, and will eventually be thoroughly exposed and eliminated by God. I thought of myself—when I saw my brothers' and sisters' safety threatened and the church's work being affected, I didn't uphold principles and protect the church's work, instead always seeking to be a so-called good person. Even if I earned the respect and approval of others, in God's eyes I was an evildoer and would ultimately be spurned and punished by Him. I was terrified when I realized these consequences and was ready to rectify my misguided pursuit. God's words also showed me the correct path of practice. Only by acting and speaking according to God's words can we benefit and edify others. It doesn't matter how we speak, whether we speak in a strong or soft voice, or how tactful we are with our words. What matters most is to speak in a way that is edifying for the brothers and sisters. As long as it's the right person, someone who can accept the truth, we should help them with love. If they don't understand the truth and damage the work, we can fellowship with them to provide guidance and support. If there is still no real improvement after fellowship, we can prune them, exposing the essence of their problem. Even if it sounds harsh or seems to ignore their feelings, this way of acting can truly benefit and support them. If they are an antichrist or evil person who is disrupting

the church's work, we should make a stand to expose and stop them or report them to our superiors to uphold the church's work and protect the brothers and sisters from being disturbed and misled. Only by doing so are we really practicing the truth, demonstrating true humanity and kindness. God's words also rectified a fallacious view I had. I thought that reporting someone for violating principles was tattling, backstabbing or being disloyal. This was a mistaken view. Doing so actually protects the church's work and is a good deed. Li Ming had a serious problem that was impacting the church's work and constraining and harming the brothers and sisters, and this was an issue of principle that concerned the church's work, I should have mentioned it to the upper leadership right away or even reported him. This wouldn't have been backstabbing; it would've been protecting the church's work. After I realized this, many of my concerns vanished and I felt much more at ease.

One time, someone reported that a brother was continually slacking off and shying away from any hardship while doing his duty, and after others pointed this out, and pruned him several times, he still wouldn't accept it at all. Based on principles, we decided that he needed to be dismissed, and that we should clearly dissect his issues so he could self-reflect. At the time, I thought, "It can be offensive to dissect someone's problems for them. Maybe I'll let my partner fellowship with him and I can stay out of it. Otherwise I might give him a bad impression." But then, I suddenly realized I was trying to protect my status and image again. I recalled God's words, which say: **"For all who perform a duty, no matter how profound or shallow their understanding of the truth is, the simplest way to practice entering into the truth reality is to think of the interests of God's house in everything, and to let go of one's selfish desires, personal intents, motives, pride, and status. Put the interests of God's**

**house first—this is the least one should do”** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Freedom and Liberation Can Be Gained Only by Casting Off One’s Corrupt Disposition). God’s words showed me a path of practice. When faced with problems, we must put aside our desires and reputation, prioritize the church’s interests and consider God’s intentions. This is the only forthright way to act and will be commended by God. Once I understood God’s demands, I felt motivated, and so I dissected the brother’s behavior in detail according to God’s words. I felt very much at ease after practicing this way. I realized that only by practicing the truth can we attain true peace and happiness.

After this experience, I was filled with gratitude to God. It was God’s word that helped me see how absurd being amiable and approachable advocated by traditional culture is and what damage it inflicts on people. It also allowed me to experience the liberation and release that comes from breaking free of the constraints and fetters of traditional culture. Thanks be to God for His salvation!



## 31. I Don't Need Your Supervision

By Mildred, Malaysia

Shortly after I came to accept Almighty God's work in the last days, Pastor Li found out. One day, he called and asked me to come by the church. I figured he was well versed in the Bible, had been serving the Lord for a number of years, and was really devout in his life. On top of that, he was always telling us to wait vigilantly for the Lord's return, and I had been wanting to share the gospel with him, and tell him that the Lord Jesus had returned. I thought this was a good opportunity. But when we met up, to my surprise, he looked at me reproachfully and demanded to know, "Deacon Zhang, how could you possibly believe in Almighty God? Why didn't you come consult with me before accepting this? I could have checked up on it for you! You are clearly lacking biblical knowledge, and without us standing watch, you can be very easily misled." Hearing Pastor Li say this made me really uncomfortable. I thought, "Investigating the true way is my own personal freedom—why should that have to undergo your approval or supervision? Besides, I have believed in the Lord for more than two decades, and even though I don't know as much about the Bible as you do, it's not like I don't have my own thoughts and opinions! I have been diligently investigating it for three months, I have read many of Almighty God's words, and only once I was certain that Almighty God's words are the voice of God did I accept." So I responded: "Pastor Li, one need only read Almighty God's words to know whether He is the Lord Jesus returned or not." Then I opened up the app of The Church of Almighty God on my phone and read a passage of Almighty God's words out. Almighty God says: **"Throughout the universe I am doing My work, and in the East, thunderous crashes issue forth endlessly, shaking all nations and**

denominations. It is My voice that has led all men into the present. I cause all men to be conquered by My voice, to fall into this stream, and surrender before Me, for I have long since reclaimed My glory from all the earth and issued it forth anew in the East. Who does not long to see My glory? Who does not anxiously await My return? Who does not thirst for My reappearance? Who does not pine for My loveliness? Who would not come to the light? Who would not look upon the richness of Canaan? Who does not long for the return of the Redeemer? Who does not adore Him who is great in power? My voice shall spread throughout the earth; I will face My chosen people and speak more words to them, like a mighty thunder shaking the mountains and rivers. I speak My words to the whole universe and to mankind. Hence the words in My mouth have become man's treasure, and all men cherish My words. The lightning flashes from the East all the way to the West. My words are such that man is loath to give them up and at the same time finds them unfathomable, but rejoices in them all the more. Like a newborn infant, all men are glad and joyful, celebrating My coming. By means of My voice, I shall bring all men before Me. Thenceforth, I shall formally enter into the race of men so that they will come to worship Me. With the glory that I radiate and the words in My mouth, I shall make it such that all men come before Me and see that the lightning flashes from the East and that I have also descended unto the 'Mount of Olives' of the East. They will see that I have already long been on earth, no longer as the Son of the Jews but as the Lightning of the East. For I have long since been resurrected, and have departed from mankind's midst, and then reappeared with glory among men. I am He who was worshiped countless ages before now, and I am also the infant forsaken by the Israelites countless ages

**before now. Moreover, I am the all-glorious Almighty God of the present age!”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. The Seven Thunders Peal—Prophesying That the Gospel of the Kingdom Shall Spread Throughout the Universe). He didn’t even wait for me to finish, but interrupted, saying impatiently, “There’s no need to go on. I downloaded this app ages ago and have read Almighty God’s words. They bear witness that His words are the words of God, but that’s not possible! All of God’s words are in the Bible. There can’t be any utterances from God outside of that. Even if the words of Almighty God do contain authority, I still won’t believe in Him!” I was really surprised to hear him say this. As a pastor, how could he say that he wouldn’t believe in Almighty God even if His words did contain authority? Wasn’t he a believer? I countered, saying, “Pastor Li, can you dare to be certain that all of God’s words are in the Bible? You yourself have often shared John 21:25, ‘And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written.’ The Lord Jesus worked and preached on the earth for three and a half years. How much do you think He said every day? How much do you think He said in every sermon He delivered? Over those three and a half years, the Lord Jesus must have delivered so many sermons, said so many things—they would be innumerable! What’s recorded in the Four Gospels can only account for a small, limited portion, the tip of the iceberg. That’s why claiming that there are no words of God outside of the Bible is simply out of line with reality. Besides, the Lord Jesus prophesied long ago: **‘I have yet many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. However, when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth’** (John 16:12–13). It’s also prophesied in the Book of Revelation that the Lord would return in the last days and open the scroll, that He would speak to the

churches. These would all be new words uttered by God in the last days, and there's no way they could have been recorded in the Bible beforehand. So, if no work or words of God existed outside of the Bible, how could those prophecies be fulfilled? In the last days, Almighty God has expressed all the truths that purify and save mankind, and this is precisely the scroll that the Book of Revelation prophesied would be opened by the Lamb. It's what was referred to by **'He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches'** (Revelation 2:7). We should seek with an open heart. This is the only way to welcome the return of the Lord." When I finished speaking, Pastor Li said disdainfully, "You have a fair amount of knowledge on the topic, and it seems you've read quite a bit of Almighty God's words! But we cannot stray from the Bible in our faith. If you do, how can you still call yourself a believer in the Lord? No matter how wonderful Almighty God's words are, even if they are the truth, I will never acknowledge or accept anything that goes beyond the Bible. I urge you to give up your faith in Almighty God. Otherwise, your permission to serve in the church will be revoked and you will end up regretting it!" So I said, "Pastor Li, as believers, aren't we waiting for the Lord to come and receive us? Now that the Lord has returned and expressed so many truths, shouldn't we look into this thoroughly? If we don't seek with an open mind and just cling to our own notions and imaginings, and miss out on our chance to welcome the Lord's return, it will be too late for regrets!" To my surprise, he responded angrily, "That's enough! I am not going to believe in Almighty God. I'll give you a little more time to think it over, and if you maintain your belief in Almighty God, I will expel you from the church." Then he walked off and didn't look back. I was really shocked to see the pastor behave like this. He was always telling us that only those who seek with an open mind will be accepted by the Lord. I never imagined that in the face of something as

momentous as the Lord's coming, he not only wouldn't do any seeking, but he would stop us from investigating it, and even threaten me with expulsion from the church. Isn't that saying one thing and doing another, being a hypocrite? That's not someone who longs for the Lord's appearance!

I went to church on Sunday, and Pastor Hong sought me out and said, "I heard you've been looking into The Church of Almighty God? The way they preach is outside of the Bible and our faith is based on Scripture. Straying from the Bible is betraying the Lord. You must give up this faith of yours in Almighty God!" So I asked him, "When the Lord Jesus came to work, did He follow the Old Testament? He preached the way of repentance, healed the sick, and cast out demons. He was crucified as mankind's sin offering. All these things that the Lord Jesus said and did were entirely beyond Scripture and were not contained in the Old Testament. Would you say that the Lord Jesus isn't the true God, that His work isn't the true way? Would you say that believing in the Lord Jesus is betraying Jehovah God? Would you dare claim that God's work and words can't go beyond the Bible? Isn't that making use of the Bible to try to delimit and resist God?" He cut me off angrily: "That's enough! If you insist on believing in Almighty God, don't bother with any regrets." At that, he chuckled scornfully and stalked off. Seeing the look on his face scared me a bit—I didn't know what he was going to do next. To my surprise, after the service started, Pastor Hong put on some videos slandering The Church of Almighty God—these groundless videos full of fabrications incensed me. The pastors and elders had been serving the Lord for many years, and they generally appeared to be really devout, but I never imagined they'd lack even the most basic God-fearing heart. How is that being a person of faith? Almighty God has expressed so many truths and they're all publicly available online, provided for everyone to seek and investigate. Whether or

not you accept them, you should never engage in slander or make false claims, and you particularly shouldn't stop others from investigating the true way. How was the pastors' behavior any different from the Pharisees who resisted the Lord Jesus back in the day? After the videos, Pastor Hong stood up at the pulpit and read a passage of Paul's words from the Bible: "I marvel that you are so soon removed from Him that called you into the grace of Christ to another gospel: Which is not another; but there be some that trouble you, and would pervert the gospel of Christ. But though we, or an angel from heaven, preach any other gospel to you than that which we have preached to you, let him be accursed" (Galatians 1:6-8). Then he said, "We are already believers in the Lord Jesus, and we must stay true to the Lord's name and His way. We can't go out and listen to just any old thing that's preached, and moreover, we cannot accept any other gospel. Right now, we cannot listen to The Church of Almighty God bearing witness that the Lord Jesus has already returned. This would be straying from and going against our faith. Anyone who is found to have accepted Almighty God will be thrown out of the church immediately! Report to me immediately if anyone shares the gospel of Almighty God with you, otherwise you are betraying the Lord!" Once he'd said all that, he looked pointedly over at me. Seeing how pleased he looked with himself, I thought of the Pharisees in the temple, misleading believers and inciting them to reject the Lord Jesus. I was really angry to see that everyone there looked terrified by what Pastor Hong said. Pastor Hong knew the Bible very well—could he really not know what was behind Paul saying this? The reality is that Paul was saying that there was only one gospel for the Age of Grace, which was the gospel of the Lord Jesus' work of redemption. Listening to any other gospel in the Age of Grace would have been betraying the Lord. But when Paul said this, God hadn't done His work in the last days yet and no one was

sharing the kingdom gospel. That's why saying "another gospel" here absolutely couldn't have been referring to the gospel of the Lord's return in the last days. Paul never said that it was wrong to preach the kingdom gospel when the Lord returns, and moreover, he never dared to say that accepting the gospel of the Lord Jesus' return was betraying the Lord. Pastor Hong was arbitrarily applying what Paul said to Almighty God's work in the last days. Isn't that taking the passage out of context and misinterpreting the Bible to lead people astray? After the service, Pastor Hong warned me once again not to share the gospel of Almighty God with any of the brothers and sisters. I thought, "The brothers and sisters all belong to God's flock, and God's sheep hear His voice. Pastor Hong is telling me not to share the gospel with them, doing everything in his power to keep them from hearing God's voice and prevent them from turning toward God. Isn't that blocking their path to entering the kingdom of heaven?" This made me think of something the Lord Jesus said, condemning the Pharisees: **"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for you neither go in yourselves, neither suffer you them that are entering to go in"** (Matthew 23:13). **"Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, you make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves"** (Matthew 23:15). Hearing testimony of the Lord's return, the clergy not only didn't do their own seeking, but they also stopped God's sheep from hearing His voice and welcoming the Lord. They were entirely the same as the Pharisees—they were all evil servants, preventing others from entering into the kingdom of heaven. I couldn't be constrained by the pastors, I had to seize any chance to share the gospel with my brothers and sisters, and

keep them from being further misled by the pastors and missing out on their chance to welcome the Lord's return.

Not long after that, Pastor Li called and asked me to come by the church out of the blue. When I arrived, there were five other people there, including him, the deacons, and administrators. Pastor Li asked me, all smiles, "So have you thought it over?" I responded earnestly, "Almighty God has expressed many truths and is doing the work of judgment in the last days. I have already determined that Almighty God is the return of the Lord Jesus by reading His words. The only way to cast off the shackles of sin and be cleansed is to accept God's judgment work in the last days. Only then will we be worthy of entering the kingdom of heaven. I will always believe in Almighty God no matter what." The words were barely out of my mouth when a deacon stood up and said, pointing at me angrily, "As a believer in Almighty God, starting tomorrow you are no longer permitted to teach Sunday School or take charge of the church's finances!" Pastor Li turned toward that deacon and waved his hand at him, then said to me, "Our sins have already been forgiven through our faith in the Lord Jesus. There's absolutely no need for the Lord to do the work of judging and cleansing mankind. He will take us directly up into the kingdom of heaven when He comes." I responded, "It is true that the Lord Jesus forgave us of our sins when He was crucified, but does having our sins forgiven mean that we no longer sin, that we have been purified? Forgiveness of sins refers to receiving the Lord Jesus' redemption so that we are no longer condemned under the law. It does not mean that we no longer sin or that we are worthy of entering the kingdom of heaven. We believe in the Lord and in the forgiveness of sins, but our sinful natures have not been eliminated—meaning we still constantly sin, confess, and sin again, reveal satanic dispositions such as arrogance and deceit, fight over fame and fortune,



jockey for power, and rebel against and resist God. We are unable to escape the bonds of sin. The Bible says: **‘Without holiness no man shall see the Lord’** (Hebrews 12:14). The Lord is holy, so as we are replete with sordidness and are completely unworthy of seeing the Lord’s face, how could we be worthy of the kingdom of heaven? This is why the Lord Jesus promised us that He would return in the last days, to express truths and do another step of work to judge and cleanse mankind. We aren’t worthy of entering God’s kingdom unless we accept God’s judgment in the last days and our corruption is cleansed.” Pastor Li then said contemptuously, “We are waiting for the Lord Jesus with nail marks on His hands, who comes on a cloud to receive us into the kingdom of heaven. Even if everything Almighty God says is the truth, I still will not accept it!” The deacons also chimed in, saying, “Yeah, we’re waiting for the Lord Jesus to descend on a cloud and take us into the kingdom of heaven.” Then they said some things slandering and blaspheming Almighty God. Seeing how rigid and stubborn they were was really infuriating for me. I said, “You are leaders in the church, but when you hear testimony that the Lord has returned, you not only refuse to seek and investigate it with an open mind, but you dare to spread fallacies, and resist and condemn Almighty God’s work. You are doing everything you can to stand in the way of us looking into and accepting the true way. Have you thought about the nature of this behavior and what the outcome and consequences will be? The Pharisees clung to their own notions and imaginings, madly defied and condemned the Lord Jesus. They had Him crucified, offending God’s disposition, and were thus damned and punished by God. Does this lesson from the Pharisees’ failure really not serve as a warning to you? You should at least listen to Almighty God’s words before coming to a decision!” Then I read them a passage of Almighty God’s words: **“Those who wish to gain life without relying on**

**the truth spoken by Christ are the most ridiculous people on earth, and those who do not accept the way of life brought by Christ are lost in fantasy. And so I say that those who do not accept Christ of the last days shall forever be loathed by God. Christ is man's gateway to the kingdom during the last days, and there are none who can go around Him. None may be perfected by God except through Christ. You believe in God, and so you must accept His words and submit to His way. You cannot only think of gaining blessings while being incapable of accepting the truth and incapable of accepting the provision of life. Christ comes during the last days so that all those who truly believe in Him may be provided with life. His work is for the sake of concluding the old age and entering the new one, and His work is the path that must be taken by all those who would enter the new age. If you are incapable of acknowledging Him, and instead condemn, blaspheme, or even persecute Him, then you are bound to burn for eternity and shall never enter the kingdom of God. For this Christ is Himself the expression of the Holy Spirit, the expression of God, the One whom God has entrusted to do His work on earth. And so I say that if you cannot accept all that is done by Christ of the last days, then you blaspheme the Holy Spirit. The retribution to be had by those who blaspheme the Holy Spirit is self-evident to all"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The

Appearance and Work of God. Only Christ of the Last Days Can Give Man the Way of Eternal Life).

Before I could even finish reading, one of the administrators stood up and shouted at me, his face red with anger, "That's enough of that! I will never accept this, no matter how much truth there is in Almighty God's words!" I said, "You are all incredibly arrogant! These are all words from the Holy Spirit, words from the mouth of God Himself. Can't you tell? Are you actually capable of recognizing the voice of God? Are you actually God's

sheep?” Pastor Li responded as contemptuously as before, “I believe in no one but the Lord Jesus!” I saw how incredibly unreasonable all of them were, and I didn’t want to say anything else to them. As I was getting ready to leave, Pastor Li threatened me: “I’ll give you one more month to reconsider. If you still believe in Almighty God, you will be expelled!” I told him angrily, “There’s no need to wait another month—you can kick me out now. I’m not afraid of being removed from the church. What I’m afraid of is failing to hear the voice of God or failing to see the Lord’s appearance, not being able to welcome the Lord, and missing out on the blessings of entering the kingdom of heaven for all eternity. I have now heard the voice of God and have been taken up before God’s throne, and am attending the Lamb’s wedding feast. Even if you don’t expel me, I still won’t ever come to services here again!” To my surprise, Pastor Li laughed coldly and said, “We can’t remove you now, or the brothers and sisters will say we aren’t treating you with love. Once another month goes by, we’ll tell them that you’ve betrayed the Lord and are determined to leave the church, that we’ve been working hard to advise you, but you still insist on believing in Almighty God. We’ll say we have no choice but to expel you from the church.” I was furious when I heard him say this. He was such a hypocrite! Pastor Li was usually very caring toward his parishioners, but it turned out it was all an act. He did that just to maintain his own image, to consolidate his position, and create a fake image of himself. It reminded me of something the Lord Jesus said, cursing the Pharisees: **“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like to white washed sepulchers, which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men’s bones, and of all uncleanness. Even so you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but within you are full of hypocrisy and iniquity”** (Matthew 23:27–28). I thought about how the brothers and sisters had been

believers for years, waiting all along to welcome the Lord's return, but they were being misled and deceived by the pastors. Believing their rumors and devilish words, they were missing out on their chance to welcome the Lord's return. This was truly tragic. No one ever would have thought that those clergy members who were constantly calling out for us to be on our guard against false christs and antichrists would be the real antichrists, and the ones leading people astray. They are like thieves crying "Thief!"—how utterly detestable! At this thought I walked out, not wanting to exchange any further words with them. Pastor Li warned me again, saying, "It's your business if you want to believe in Almighty God, but I will not allow you to share this gospel with the other brothers and sisters."

Whenever I ran into brothers and sisters I'd been in services with before, they were really cold toward me and some tried to avoid me. This was really upsetting for me, but I knew this was entirely due to the pastors misleading them, provoking them, and stirring them up. I thought of a passage of God's word that I had read in a gathering before: **"There are those who read the Bible in grand churches and recite it all day long, yet not one among them understands the purpose of God's work. Not one among them is able to know God; still less can any one among them accord with God's intentions. They are all worthless, vile people, each standing on high to lecture God. They willfully oppose God even as they carry His banner. Claiming faith in God, still they eat the flesh and drink the blood of man. All such people are devils that devour the soul of man, head demons that deliberately disturb those trying to step onto the right path, and stumbling blocks impeding those who seek God. They may appear of 'sound constitution,' but how are their followers to know that they are none other than antichrists who lead people to stand against God? How are their followers to know that they**

**are living devils dedicated to the devouring of human souls?”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. All People Who Do Not Know God Are People Who Oppose God). It made me think about the pastors and elders. They are familiar with the Bible, they outwardly appear devout and loving, and it seems as if they're remaining alert, longing for the Lord's coming. But when they do hear someone bear witness that the Lord has returned, not only do they refuse to seek and investigate, but they stubbornly hold fast to their religious notions and distort the Scripture. They know very well that Almighty God has expressed all sorts of truths, but they still refuse to accept Him, instead intentionally resisting and condemning Him, even going so far as to spread all sorts of heresies and fallacies. They do everything possible to elevate and bear witness to the Bible, saying that all of God's work and words are contained within it, that anything else is heresy and a betrayal of the Lord, making people blindly worship and idolize the Bible. It is an attempt to use the Bible to keep believers firmly under their control. They're always making noise about being responsible for believers' lives while doing everything they can to stand in the way of them seeking and investigating Almighty God's work in the last days. They are even using stopping us from serving and kicking us out of the church as despicable tactics to threaten and frighten us, to pressure us to give up the true way. They would rather see people stranded in a religious wasteland without the Holy Spirit's work so that they give them offerings, provide for them, and have their chance to welcome the Lord's return ruined. They don't allow people to read Almighty God's words, hear God's voice, or turn to God. It's incredibly malicious! They are the evil servants, antichrists, and modern-day Pharisees exposed by God's work of the last days. They are demons standing in the way of people's entry into the kingdom of heaven. I saw the true face of their hypocrisy and made a resolution: No matter what

they do to stand in the way or disrupt me, I will never be constrained by them, and I will continue praying to and relying on God, and looking for every chance to keep sharing the gospel with those brothers and sisters who genuinely believe in the Lord. That way God's sheep can hear His voice sooner, break free from the misleading and control of the religious world's antichrists, and follow the footsteps of the Lamb.

## **32. Stay True to the Truth, Not Affection**

By Jiaming, China

I received a letter from my church leader one day in July 2017 saying the church was cleansing away disbelievers, and asking me to write an assessment of my brother's behavior. I was surprised, and a bit nervous. Was the church about to clear my brother out? Otherwise, why would they have me write about his behavior? I knew that he didn't read God's word or attend gatherings in his free time, but was instead always out having fun with his friends, following worldly trends, and not displaying any interest in matters of faith. He even told me not to be so focused on faith, but to get out into the world more, like him. I tried to fellowship on God's word with him, but he wouldn't listen and even got annoyed, saying, "Enough, already! There's no point in you telling me all this stuff. I don't care!" Then he just went to bed. The brothers and sisters offered him fellowship plenty of times, advising him to read God's word and go to gatherings, but he wouldn't accept it. He said believing in God was very restrictive, that he always had to find time to attend gatherings, and that joining the church in the first place wasn't even his choice—he only did it to appease our mother. This was how he had always been. Judging from that, he really was a disbeliever, and it would be in line with the principles if he were cleared out from the church. But we'd always been close. Since we were little, he'd always save extra food for me when he got something good to eat, and give me half of any money people gave to him. Once, a teacher gave me detention after school, and my brother got so upset that he cried. Most siblings in our village weren't as close as we were. Thinking about all that, I couldn't bear to write about his problems; I didn't want to break our bond. If I were honest about his behavior, and the church ended up clearing him

out, then wouldn't he have no chance at salvation? Wouldn't that be cruel and heartless of me? What if he found out what I'd written about him and never spoke to me again? I decided to write something more positive, saying he read God's word sometimes, and that even though he didn't go to gatherings, in his heart he still believed in God. That would give him some leeway. When the leader read it, she might fellowship with him more and maybe he wouldn't be cleared out. And yet, if I wasn't honest about his behavior, that would be lying and covering up the truth. That would mislead our brothers and sisters and disrupt the church's work. On one side was the church's work, and on the other, my brother. I didn't know which side to choose. I was really upset, and couldn't calm down enough to do my duty. The thought of putting pen to paper and writing about his behavior made my mind go blank; I didn't know where to begin. The more I thought about it, the more lost I felt, so I silently prayed, "God, I want to be fair in my brother's assessment, but I'm constrained by affection, so I can't do it. Please guide me to not be ruled by affection in my approach, but to instead follow Your word."

I read this passage of God's word after praying: **"Those who drag their utterly nonbelieving children and relatives into church are all extremely selfish, and they are just exhibiting kindness. These people only focus on being loving, regardless of whether they believe or not and regardless of whether it is God's intention. Some bring their wives before God, or drag their parents before God, and whether or not the Holy Spirit agrees with this or is working in them, they blindly continue to 'adopt talented people' for God. What benefit can possibly be gained from extending kindness toward these nonbelievers? Even if they, who are without the presence of the Holy Spirit, struggle to follow God, they still cannot be saved as one might believe. Those who can**



**receive salvation are not actually so easy to obtain. People who have not undergone the Holy Spirit's work and trials, and have not been perfected by God incarnate, are utterly incapable of being made complete. Therefore, from the moment they begin to nominally follow God, those people lack the Holy Spirit's presence. In light of their conditions and actual states, they simply cannot be made complete. As such, the Holy Spirit decides not to expend much energy upon them, nor does He provide any enlightenment or guide them in any way; He merely allows them to follow along, and will ultimately reveal their outcomes—this is enough”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. God and Man Will Enter Into Rest Together). Reading God's word, I understood that wanting to say nice things about my brother to keep him in the church and give him a chance at salvation was my own wishful thinking. God's word very clearly tells us that those who don't truly follow God, but who believe in Him in name only, cannot be saved. God only saves those who love and accept the truth. Only that kind of person can gain the presence and work of the Holy Spirit, understand and obtain the truth, and ultimately be saved by God and survive the disasters. In essence, disbelievers are averse to the truth. They can never accept the truth, and no matter how long they believe, their perspectives, outlooks on life, and values never change. They're just like nonbelievers. God doesn't acknowledge them, and they'll never gain the Holy Spirit's enlightenment or guidance. They can follow until the end, but they'll never change their life dispositions—they can't be saved. Thinking about my brother's behavior, he didn't love the truth, he was averse to it. He placed his values in worldly pleasures just like a nonbeliever, not in reading God's word or going to gatherings, and definitely not in doing his duty. He even often said, “Believing in God is pointless. It doesn't matter whether you believe or not.” He wouldn't listen

to anyone's fellowship, and too much would annoy him. Judging from my brother's overall behavior, he was a disbeliever, and God wouldn't acknowledge him at all. He would never gain the Holy Spirit's work or achieve understanding of the truth. No matter how nicely I wrote about him to keep him in the church, he'd never be saved. Since at this point I already determined that he was a disbeliever, if I got caught up in affection and covered for him to have him stay in the church, wouldn't I be clearly violating the principles? If I didn't fairly and accurately write my brother's assessment based on the facts, but instead misguided my brothers and sisters to keep someone in the church who should have been cleansed away, wouldn't that be hindering the church's work? Realizing how serious the consequences would be, I knew I had to let go of my affection, follow the principles, and give the church accurate information about my brother—only that would be in line with God's intentions. Knowing this, I wrote my brother's assessment and handed it to the leader, feeling like I had finally done the right thing. In the end, according to the principles, the church cleared him out, and I was able to calmly accept that outcome. Thanks to the guidance of God's word, I didn't act according to my affection and protect my brother, but instead evaluated him fairly and objectively. I was very grateful to God.

Then, in July 2021, the church leader asked me to write an assessment of my mother. I thought of how she wasn't sharing the gospel according to principles lately, which nearly got some brothers and sisters arrested. When others pointed out her problem, she wouldn't accept it, instead squabbling endlessly over what actually happened. The brothers and sisters didn't dare bring up any of her issues after that. In fact, that wasn't the first or second time my mother had stirred up trouble. Once, during a gathering, a leader asked another sister to read God's word instead of my mother. My mother

started saying that the leader was oppressing her and was a false leader. A sister noticed how loud she was being and asked her to keep her voice down and be aware of the environment. My mother accused the sister of just trying to find fault with her, and told her not to come back next time. She would bicker endlessly over every little thing and was a troublemaker in gatherings. She'd become a disturbance to church life. The brothers and sisters fellowshiped with her and pruned her many times, hoping she'd reflect and repent, but she wouldn't accept it. She even twisted the facts, saying she only said one little thing wrong and people were making a big deal of it. She wouldn't accept the truth. According to the principles, someone with such behavior should be isolated for self-reflection to keep them from disrupting and impacting the brothers' and sisters' gatherings. I knew I should accurately write about her behavior for the church as soon as possible, but then I thought about how much she hated losing face and how explosive her temper was. She tended to give the cold shoulder to anyone who criticized her. If she knew I'd written about her issues, would she be able to take it? Wouldn't it be humiliating for her if she knew I said those things about her? Would she become negative and give up her faith? The more I thought about it, the more upset I became, and I kept thinking of all the ways she'd shown me love and care in the past. Once, when I was little and had a high fever in the middle of the night, she carried me on her back to the doctor in a neighboring village. My fever was so high that the doctor was too afraid to see me, so that same night my mother carried me even farther to the town hospital. She always helped me with everything in my life, thinking of every tiny detail. She gave birth to me and raised me, shared the gospel with me, brought me before God, and supported me in my duty. She was so good to me—if I exposed her, wouldn't that be heartless? Wouldn't it be hurtful for her? If others knew I had personally exposed her

disruption of church life, would they criticize me for being too ruthless and cold-hearted toward my own mother? Would they say I was an ungrateful wretch of a son? I knew my mother wasn't someone who accepted the truth, but she'd been so caring toward me. She was my own mother, after all. So, even though the leader kept pressing me to write her assessment, I continued to put it off. In the past, we'd been a family of believers. We'd sing hymns and pray together, read God's word and talk about our feelings. It was such a happy time, and sometimes those memories would surface in my mind. But now, my brother had been cleared out, and my mother was potentially going to be isolated so that she could engage in self-reflection. I was miserable and didn't know how to face the situation. I wasn't in the mood to perform my duty, and I didn't feel a burden to seek the truth to help my brothers and sisters with their problems. I was just going through the motions in gatherings, absent-minded and unable to fellowship about anything. I was muddling through the days, truly suffering. I knew I wasn't in a good state, so I came before God and prayed, asking Him to guide me out of my negativity so that I wouldn't be constrained by affection.

Later, I read God's word: **“What issues relate to feelings? First is how you evaluate your own family members, and how you approach the things they do. ‘The things they do’ here naturally include when they disrupt and disturb the church’s work, when they pass judgment on people behind their backs, when they engage in some of the practices of disbelievers, and so on. Can you approach these things impartially? When it is necessary for you to write an evaluation of your family members, can you do so objectively and impartially, putting your own feelings aside? This relates to how you approach your family members. Furthermore, do you harbor feelings toward those who you get along with or who previously helped you? Are you able to view**

**their actions and comportment in an objective, impartial, and accurate way? If they disrupt and disturb the work of the church, will you be able to promptly report or expose them after you find out about it?”**

(The Word, Vol. 5. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers (2)). **“Say, for example, that your relatives or parents are believers in God, and because of evildoing, creating disturbances, or not having any acceptance of the truth, they are cleared out. However, you are not discerning toward them, don’t know why they were cleared out, feel extremely upset, and are always complaining that God’s house has no love and is not fair to people. You should pray to God and seek the truth, then evaluate just what kind of people these relatives are based on God’s words. If you truly understand the truth, you will be able to accurately define them, and you will see that everything God does is right, and that He is a righteous God. Then, you will have no complaints, will be able to submit to God’s arrangements, and will not try to defend your relatives or parents. The point here is not to sever your kinship; it is just to define what kind of people they are, and make it so that you are discerning toward them, and know why they were eliminated. If these things are truly clear to you in your heart, and your views are correct and in line with the truth, then you will be able to stand on the same side as God, and your views on the matter will be fully compatible with God’s words. If you are not able to accept the truth or view people according to God’s words, and still side with relationships and perspectives of the flesh when viewing people, then you will never be able to cast off this fleshly relationship, and will still treat these people as your kin—closer even than your brothers and sisters at church, in which case there will be a contradiction between God’s words and your views toward your family in this matter—a**

**conflict, even, and in such circumstances, it would be impossible for you to stand on the side of God, and you would have notions and misunderstandings about God. Thus, if people are to achieve compatibility with God, first of all, their views on matters must be in line with God's words; they must be able to view people and things based on God's words, accept that God's words are the truth, and be able to put aside the traditional notions of man. Regardless of what person or matter you are faced with, you must be able to maintain the same perspectives and views as God, and your perspectives and views must be in harmony with the truth. This way, your views and the way you approach people will not be hostile to God, and you will be capable of submission to God and compatibility with God. Such people could never possibly resist God again; they are the very people that God wishes to gain"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. How to Identify the Nature Essence of Paul). God's word helped me understand that we can't assess things or people from an emotional perspective. We must abide by the truth of God's word to discern someone's nature essence, and what sort of person they are. This is the proper way to assess someone, assuring we don't fall prey to affection. I was always analyzing the situation with my mother from an emotional perspective, thinking about how she gave birth to me and how she loved and cared for me. This made it too difficult for me to pick up the pen and write a truthful assessment. But God says we need discernment over people based on their nature essence; being able to discern their nature essence is the only way to free ourselves from affection and treat them fairly and according to principles. What kind of person was my mother, really? She was enthusiastic and caring toward others in her everyday life, but that just means she was warm-hearted. She took great care of me, but that just means she fulfilled a mother's responsibility. By

nature, however, she was arrogant and wouldn't accept the truth. She'd become judgmental and resistant toward anyone who pointed out her issues or pruned her, and would sulk over it. When it was bad, she'd even engage in conflicts with others and badger them endlessly, which was constraining for others. Based on her behavior, if she kept gathering with the brothers and sisters, she was sure to disrupt church life and hold up others' entry into life. If she were isolated for self-reflection according to the principles, everyone could have proper gatherings once again, and that arrangement would be a warning to her. If she truly reflected and learned about herself, it would be beneficial to her life. But if she resisted and rejected it, or even abandoned her faith, she'd be exposed and eliminated. Then I would see her nature essence more clearly, whether she was a weed or wheat would be obvious at a glance, and there would be no reason for me to try to keep her in the church. At that point I understood God's intention. God set up this situation hoping I'd gain discernment and learn to see people's nature essence according to His word, so I could set affection aside in my actions and treat people according to principle.

After this, I read another passage of God's word: **"Who is Satan, who are demons, and who are God's enemies if not resisters who do not believe in God? Are they not those people who are rebellious against God? Are they not those who claim to have faith, yet who lack truth? Are they not those who merely seek to obtain blessings while being unable to bear witness for God? You still mingle with those demons today and treat them with conscience and love, but in this case are you not extending good intentions toward Satan? Are you not in league with demons? If people have made it to this point and are still unable to distinguish between good and evil, and continue to blindly be loving and merciful without any desire to seek God's intentions or being able**

**in any way to take God's intentions as their own, then their endings will be all the more wretched. Anyone who does not believe in the God in the flesh is an enemy of God. If you can bear conscience and love toward an enemy, do you not lack a sense of justice? If you are compatible with those which I detest and with which I disagree, and still bear love or personal feelings toward them, then are you not rebellious? Are you not intentionally resisting God? Does such a person possess truth? If people bear conscience toward enemies, love for demons, and mercy for Satan, then are they not intentionally disrupting God's work?"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. God and Man Will Enter Into Rest Together). God's word revealed my precise state. I knew my mother had believed in God for years but wouldn't accept the truth, and when others tried to help her with her issues, to prune her, she couldn't accept it from God. She was always quibbling over every little thing and disrupting church life, serving as Satan's minion. But I wouldn't stand up and expose her, I just kept covering things up and shielding her. I thought that not exposing her or writing a truthful assessment was the conscientious thing to do. In actuality, I was showing love and a conscience for Satan, not remotely considering the work of the church or whether my brothers' and sisters' entry into life might suffer harm. I was taking Satan's side and speaking for Satan. Wasn't this what God called **"intentionally resisting God"**? My love was without principle, and I didn't know right from wrong—it was a confused love. I was shielding my mother, enabling her to continue disrupting church life. I played a part in her evil. Acting this way, wasn't I hurting others and myself? I was blinded by affection, paralyzed by it. The leader urged me multiple times to write an assessment of my mother, but I kept putting it off and delaying church work. Realizing this, my heart was consumed by guilt. I didn't know why I couldn't help but be



constrained by affection while facing this situation. What was the real problem? I came before God to pray and seek, asking Him to guide me to understand my issues.

I read a passage of God's word, which helped me gain further insight into myself. God's words say: **"By what principle do God's words ask that people treat others? Love what God loves, and hate what God hates: This is the principle that should be adhered to. God loves those who pursue the truth and are able to follow His will; these are also the people that we should love. Those who are not able to follow God's will, who hate and rebel against God—these people are detested by God, and we should detest them, too. This is what God asks of man. ... If a person is someone who denies and opposes God, who is cursed by God, but they are a parent or relative of yours, they don't appear to be an evil person as far as you can tell, and they treat you well, then you might find yourself unable to hate that person, and might even remain in close contact with them, your relationship unchanged. Hearing that God hates such people will trouble you, and you are unable to stand on the side of God and ruthlessly reject them. You're always constrained by feelings, and you cannot fully let go of them. What is the reason for this? This happens because your feelings are too strong, and they hinder you from practicing the truth. That person is good to you, so you can't bring yourself to hate them. You could only hate them if they did hurt you. Would that hatred be in line with the truth principles? Also, you're bound by traditional notions, thinking that they are a parent or relative, so if you hate them, you would be scorned by society and reviled by public opinion, condemned as unfilial, without a conscience, and not even human. You think you would suffer divine condemnation and punishment. Even if you want to hate them, your**

conscience won't let you. Why does your conscience function this way? It's because a way of thinking has been sown within you since you were a child, through the inheritance of your family, the education given to you by your parents, and the indoctrination of traditional culture. This way of thinking is rooted very deeply in your heart, and it makes you mistakenly believe that filial piety is perfectly natural and justified, and that anything inherited from your ancestors is always good. You learned it first and it remains dominant, creating a great stumbling block and disturbance in your faith and acceptance of the truth, leaving you unable to put God's words into practice, and to love what God loves, hate what God hates. You know in your heart that your life came from God, not from your parents, and you also know that your parents not only don't believe in God, but resist God, that God hates them and you should submit to God, stand on His side, but you just can't bring yourself to hate them, even if you want to. You can't turn that corner, you can't steel your heart, and you cannot practice the truth. What's the root of this? Satan uses this kind of traditional culture and notions of morality to bind your thoughts, your mind, and your heart, leaving you unable to accept God's words; you have been possessed by these things of Satan, and rendered incapable of accepting God's words. When you want to practice God's words, these things cause disturbance within you, cause you to oppose the truth and God's requirements, and make you powerless to rid yourself of the yoke of traditional culture. After struggling for a while, you compromise: You prefer to believe traditional notions of morality are correct and in line with the truth, and so you reject or forsake God's words. You do not accept God's words as the truth and you think nothing of being saved, feeling that you still live in this world, and can only survive by relying

**on these people. Unable to endure society's recrimination, you would rather choose to give up the truth and God's words, abandoning yourself to traditional notions of morality and the influence of Satan, preferring to offend God and not practice the truth. Is man not pitiful? Do they not have need of God's salvation?"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Only by Recognizing One's Own Misguided Views Can One Truly Transform). I understood from God's word that He requires us to love what He loves and hate what He hates. The Lord Jesus also once said: **"Who is My mother? And who are My brothers? ... whoever shall follow the will of My Father which is in heaven, the same is My brother, and sister, and mother"** (Matthew 12:48, 50). God loves those who pursue the truth and are able to accept it. These are the only type of people I should call brothers and sisters; the only type I should love, and aid out of love. Those who are averse to the truth and never practice it are all disbelievers, not brothers and sisters. Even if they are our parents or relatives, we should discern and expose them according to the truth principles. This doesn't mean we shouldn't be filial to our parents, or won't care for them in the future, but it means we should treat them rationally and fairly, according to their nature essence. Yet "Blood is thicker than water" and "Man is not inanimate; how can he be free from emotions?" were satanic poisons I was steeped in. I wasn't principled in how I treated people, and I always protected and sided with my family based on affection. When I was writing my brother's assessment, I knew he'd already revealed himself to be a disbeliever and should be cleared out from the church, but I was caught up in my affections and didn't want to write out the truth. I wanted to conceal the facts and deceive my brothers and sisters. When the leader asked me to write my mother's assessment, I knew she was disruptive to church life and that I should write an accurate, objective assessment to help the leader expose and

restrict her. But thinking of her as my mother, and how good she was to me, I was afraid that if I wrote honestly about her behavior, I'd always feel guilty and wouldn't be able to live with it. I was also afraid others would think I was ruthless and cold-blooded. Full of misgivings and apprehension, I kept putting it off. I saw that these satanic poisons were deeply rooted in my heart, pinning me to my affections. They made me unprincipled in my dealings with others, and kept me from upholding the work of the church. I was standing on the side of Satan, rebelling against and resisting God. The fact was, my mother and brother were both disbelievers, and exposing their behavior was the just thing to do. It was protecting the church's work and following God's requirements. It was loving what God loves, and hating what God hates, and a testimony of practicing the truth. But I saw practicing the truth and exposing Satan as something negative; I saw it as heartless, unconscientious, and treacherous. How confused I was! I was mistaking black for white, good for bad. I was tied down by my affections and consumed by negativity because of it, with no motivation to do my duty. Without God's timely enlightenment and guidance, my affections would have done me in. Living within my affections was nearly the end of me. I was truly playing with fire.

Later, I did more self-reflection, realizing my reluctance to write about my mother stemmed from another misconception—namely, that exposing her would be heartless of me, as she raised me with such kindness. I read a passage of God's word that changed my perspective on this. God's words say: **“God created this world and brought man, a living being unto which He bestowed life, into it. Next, man came to have parents and kin, and was no longer alone. Ever since man first laid eyes on this material world, he was destined to exist within the ordination of God. The breath of life from God supports each and every living being**

**throughout growth into adulthood. During this process, no one feels that man is growing up under the care of God; rather, they believe that man is doing so under the loving care of his parents, and that it is his own life instinct that directs his growing up. This is because man knows not who bestowed his life, or from whence it came, much less the way in which the instinct of life creates miracles. He knows only that food is the basis on which his life continues, that perseverance is the source of his existence, and that the beliefs in his mind are the capital upon which his survival depends. Of God's grace and provision, man is utterly oblivious, and thus does he fritter away the life bestowed upon him by God.... Not a single one of this humanity that God cares for day and night takes it upon themselves to worship Him. God only continues to work on man, for whom He holds out no expectations, as He has planned. He does so in the hope that one day, man will awaken from his dream and suddenly realize the value and meaning of life, the price God paid for all that He has given him, and the eager solicitude with which God waits for man to turn back to Him"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. God Is the Source of Man's Life). I learned from God's word that from the outside, it looks like my mother gave birth to me and raised me, and she has been the one caring for me in life. In reality, however, the source of human life is God, and everything I've enjoyed has been given by God. God gave me life, and arranged my family and home for me. It was also God's arrangements that allowed me to hear His voice and come before Him. I should be thanking God, and I should practice the truth in all things that come before me to satisfy God and repay His love. I shouldn't stand on the side of my family and act for Satan, hindering the church's work. Realizing this was a wake-up call for me. I had to come before God to

repent, and I couldn't keep following my affections. After that, I accurately exposed my mother's disruptive behavior to church life.

A month later, I was elected to be a church leader. I learned that some church members still hadn't fully discerned my mother's behavior. I thought, "I should talk to them about how my mother had been disruptive to church life, so they can learn to discern and treat her according to the truth principles." But just as I was about to, I felt conflicted. If, during fellowship and dissection, the brothers and sisters did gain discernment over my mother's behavior, would they abandon her? Would this upset my mother? I felt that I couldn't bring myself to say anything. I realized I was being constrained by affection again and remembered the word of God that I had read previously—that I should love what God loves and hate what He hates. My mother caused problems in church life, and that is something God hates. I couldn't keep shielding her out of affection. It was my responsibility to expose and dissect the situation, according to the truth principles, so the brothers and sisters could gain discernment. So, I fellowshipped about and dissected how my mother had disrupted church life, and the others gained some discernment and learned some lessons. Most people ended up agreeing that she should be isolated for self-reflection. After putting this into practice, I felt relaxed and at peace. I thank God from the bottom of my heart for the guidance and enlightenment of His word in helping me understand the truth, find principles to practice, and understand how to treat my family members. Without that, I would still be constrained by affection, doing things to resist God. These experiences have shown me that in treating people and handling situations within the church, all must be done according to the truth principles. Only this is in line with God's intention. It is the only way to feel free and gain a sense of inner peace. Thanks be to God!

## 33. Getting Covid Revealed Me

By Jiang Ping, China

These last few years, as the coronavirus pandemic spread around the world, more and more people got infected with the virus, many of them dying from it. I thought to myself, “The end of God’s work will be followed by the great calamity, and all who do evil and resist God will sink into disaster and be destroyed. Only those who accept the judgment and chastisement of God’s words and are purified can receive God’s protection and enter God’s kingdom. I’ve got to step up my spreading of the gospel and performance of my duty and prepare more good deeds. Only then will I have a good outcome and destination.” I also thought, “After I accepted God’s work of the last days, I gave up my work to spread the gospel. I was arrested several times, and I never sold out the brothers and sisters or the church. Afterward, I kept spreading the gospel as I did before, and I’ve gained quite a few people in these years. Even though I’m already 70 years old, I’m still in charge of the gospel work of several churches, and their results aren’t bad. I trust that as long as I persist in doing my duty properly, God will definitely save me in the future!” Thinking of this, I rejoiced in my heart, and I was very active in my duty.

One day in December 2022, when I got up in the morning, I felt a bit feverish, with a scratchy throat and a cough. I had recently been in contact with someone who had Covid, so I suspected that I’d been infected as well. However, my symptoms weren’t too serious at the time, and I could still tolerate them, so I didn’t take it too seriously. After resting at home for a couple days, I was feeling a little better. At the time, I was quite happy, thinking that since I had been believing in God and always doing my duty in the church over these years, God had allowed me to recover quickly, so I

especially ought to spread the gospel and prepare more good deeds. But unexpectedly, my illness grew more serious later on. One day, I had returned home after spreading the gospel when suddenly my whole body felt weak, and I was running a high fever and feeling dizzy. The next day, I still had a high fever that wouldn't let up. At that time, I panicked a bit, thinking, "When I got sick, I didn't complain and kept doing my duty as usual. I should have received God's protection, so why am I suddenly feeling worse? Since the coronavirus outbreak, a lot of people around the world have died, many of them elderly. If I keep getting worse, am I going to die too?" During those few days, I took some medicine to lower my fever, but it remained on the high side. I felt fatigued and was coughing constantly. Especially when I heard about older people I knew dying from Covid, I got a bit scared and anxious, thinking, "God's work will be over soon. If I die now, can I still be saved? Will all I've expended over these years be wasted? There are some people in the church who don't do any duties; how have they not been infected yet? Meanwhile, I've given up my family and career and always performed my duty, and I've suffered a lot and paid quite a price. Why hasn't God protected me?" Thinking of this, I couldn't help but feel despondent. Although I didn't say anything and continued doing my duty, my heart had lost its vigor, and I didn't want to suffer or pay a price in my duty. When the leader talked to me about putting me in charge of the gospel work of a few other churches, I was somewhat unhappy about it. I thought it was more important to keep myself in good health. If I had to worry about too many things, my body couldn't tolerate it. Plus, I still hadn't completely recovered from my last bout with Covid. If I was infected again, I might really not make it. In doing my duty after that, whenever I got chills and coughed, I feared that things would get worse, and I was often worried and afraid. I realized that my state was incorrect,



and I prayed to God, “God! You have permitted me to have this illness, but I’m making demands of You and am never able to submit. Please guide me to submit to Your orchestrations and arrangements and to seek the truth and learn lessons from it!”

After praying, I read some of God’s words: **“When people are unable to see through to, understand, accept, or submit to the environments that God orchestrates and His sovereignty, and when people face various difficulties in their daily lives, or when these difficulties exceed what normal people can bear, they subconsciously feel all kinds of worry and anxiety, and even distress. They don’t know what tomorrow will be like, or the day after, or how things will be in a few years’ time, or what their future will be like, and so they feel distressed, anxious, and worried about all manner of things. What is the context in which people feel distressed, anxious, and worried about all manner of things? It is that they don’t believe in the sovereignty of God—that is, they are unable to believe in and see through to God’s sovereignty. Even if they saw it with their own eyes, they wouldn’t understand it, or believe it. They don’t believe that God holds sovereignty over their fate, they don’t believe that their lives are in God’s hands, and so distrust arises in their hearts toward God’s sovereignty and arrangements, and then blame arises, and they are unable to submit”** (The Word, Vol. 6. On the Pursuit of the Truth I. How to Pursue the Truth (3)). **“People with an illness will often think, ‘Oh, I’m determined to perform my duty well, but I’ve got this illness. I ask God to keep me from harm, and with God’s protection I need not be afraid. But if I get exhausted when performing my duties, will my condition flare up? What will I do if my condition really flares up? If I need to be admitted to hospital to undergo an operation, I have no money to pay for it, so if I don’t borrow the money to pay for my**

treatment, will my condition get even worse? And if it gets really bad, will I die? Could such a death be considered a normal death? If I really do die, will God remember the duties I've performed? Will I be considered to have done good deeds? Will I attain salvation?' ... Whenever they think of these things, they get a profound feeling of anxiety rising up in their hearts. Even though they never stop performing their duty and they always do what they're supposed to, they think constantly about their illness, their health, their future, and about their life and death. Finally, they reach the conclusion of wishfully thinking, 'God will heal me, God will keep me safe. God won't abandon me, and God won't stand by and do nothing if He sees me getting sick.' There is no basis at all for such thoughts, and they can even be said to be a kind of notion. People will never be able to resolve their practical difficulties with such notions and imaginings as these, and in their innermost hearts, they feel vaguely distressed, anxious, and worried about their health and their illnesses; they have no idea who will take responsibility for these things, or whether anyone will take responsibility for them at all" (The Word, Vol. 6. On the Pursuit of the Truth I. How to Pursue the Truth (3)). God exposed that people do not truly understand God's almightiness and sovereignty and are always fearing death. Because of this, they live in negative emotions of worrying and being concerned. My state was exactly the kind that God exposed. After getting Covid, I got better quickly at first, so I was happy and thanked God for His care and protection. Later, when my condition became serious and I had a high fever, I became scared, worrying that since I was old, I could die from this virus if my illness got worse. I lived in despondency, having no energy when doing my duty. In particular, when the leader wanted to put me in charge of the gospel work of several other churches, I feared that if my duty was too

strenuous, my condition would worsen, and I'd end up dying from Covid, and so I didn't dare to accept it. I often lived in anxiety and fear amidst this illness, not even in the right frame of mind to do the duty I ought to do. God is the Creator who holds sovereignty over and controls everything. When I fall ill, when I recover, when my life ends—these things are all in God's hands, and I ought to submit to His orchestrations and arrangements. However, I didn't have faith in God's sovereignty or believe that it is He who controls everything, always living in concern and fear. I was so foolish! God had permitted me to suffer this illness, and I ought to seek the truth and learn lessons from it. If I always lived in this emotion of negativity, when I truly stared death in the face one day, I would still complain, misunderstanding and blaming God while even speaking words that resisted Him, which He would detest and condemn. Thinking of this, I became scared, and I also felt a sense of urgency, wanting to seek the truth and resolve this state.

While seeking, I read a passage of God's words: **“Upon what basis do you—a created being—make demands of God? People are not qualified to make demands of God. There is nothing more unreasonable than making demands of God. He will do what He ought to do, and His disposition is righteous. Righteousness is by no means fairness or reasonableness; it is not egalitarianism, or a matter of allocating to you what you deserve in accordance with how much work you have completed, or paying you for whatever work you have done, or giving you your due according to what effort you expend. This is not righteousness, it is merely being fair and reasonable. Very few people are capable of knowing God's righteous disposition. Suppose God had eliminated Job after Job bore witness for Him: Would this be righteous? In fact, it would be. Why is this called righteousness? How**

**do people view righteousness? If something is in line with people's notions, it is then very easy for them to say that God is righteous; however, if they do not see that thing as being in line with their notions—if it is something that they are incapable of comprehending—then it would be difficult for them to say that God is righteous. If God had destroyed Job back then, people would not have said He was righteous. Actually, though, whether people have been corrupted or not, and whether they have been profoundly corrupted or not, does God have to justify Himself when He destroys them? Should He have to explain to people upon what basis it is that He does so? Must God tell people the rules He has ordained? There is no need. In God's eyes, someone who is corrupt, and who is liable to oppose God, is without any worth; however God handles them will be appropriate, and all are the arrangements of God. If you were displeasing to God's eyes, and if He said that He had no use for you after your testimony and therefore destroyed you, would this, too, be His righteousness? It would. ... Everything that God does is righteous. Though humans may not be able to perceive God's righteousness, they should not make judgments at will. If something He does appears to humans as unreasonable, or if they have any notions about it, and that leads them to say that He is not righteous, then they are being most unreasonable” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Part Three). Pondering God's words, I realized that in the past, I hadn't truly understood God's righteous disposition. I had always thought that since I'd expended myself for God when doing my duty, I should receive His care and protection and shouldn't be faced with illness or even death. I thought that this was God's righteousness. Under the influence of this mistaken view, I always thought that since I had believed in God for many years, suffered a lot and paid quite a price, and even**

persevered with my duty after getting Covid, God should therefore keep me safe or help me recover from illness as quickly as possible. However, when things didn't go as I expected, I misunderstood and complained about God, having no energy when doing my duty. Especially when I saw that some brothers and sisters who didn't do any duty hadn't gotten Covid while I always expended myself enthusiastically and did my duty but got infected, I felt this was unfair and thought that God was unrighteous, no longer devoting myself to my duty and even being unwilling to supervise a few more churches' work. Originally, I thought that after believing in God for years and always persevering in my duty, I'd gained a bit of submission toward God, but once I was staring death in the face, my rebelliousness and resistance were revealed, and I had no submission whatsoever. I had enjoyed so much watering and provision from God's words; performing my duty and expending myself a bit were things I was supposed to do. However, I went so far as to use them as capital to drive bargains and make transactions with God, complaining about Him when my desires weren't satisfied. I was truly so unreasonable! God is the Creator; whatever God does and however He treats people, all of it is righteous and all of it has His intention in it. I mustn't judge the things God does based on my notions and imaginings. I thought of a passage of God's words: **"Is it not foolish to feel distressed, anxious, and worried about things you cannot decide for yourself? (Yes.) People should set about resolving the things they can resolve themselves, and for those things they cannot do themselves, they should wait for God; people should submit silently and ask God to protect them—this is the mindset people should have. When illness really does strike and death really is near, then people should submit and not complain or rebel against God or say things that blaspheme against God or things that attack Him. Instead, people should stand as**

**created beings and experience and appreciate all that comes from God—they should not try to choose things for themselves”** (The Word, Vol. 6. On the Pursuit of the Truth I. How to Pursue the Truth (4)). Pondering God’s words, I felt even more self-reproachful and humiliated. I was so far away from meeting God’s demands. My health, my death, and everything else of mine were all orchestrated by God. If Covid took my life, this would be something God permitted, and whether I lived or died, I ought to submit to His sovereignty and arrangements. This was the minimum amount of reason that a created being should possess. So, I knelt down and prayed to God, “God, I am so rebellious! Whether or not my illness gets better, I’m willing to submit to Your arrangements. I won’t complain about You any longer, and I won’t make unreasonable demands of You.”

Later, I reflected on myself, thinking, “When I’m not facing illness or disaster, I can be active in my duty and frequently fellowship with brothers and sisters that no matter what happens to us, we must always submit to God’s orchestrations and arrangements. So why did I misunderstand and complain about God when my illness got worse, even losing the energy to do my duty? Why have I revealed this rebelliousness and resistance?” While seeking, I read some of God’s words: **“Before deciding to do their duty, deep in their hearts, antichrists are brimming with expectations toward their prospects, gaining blessings, a good destination, and even a crown, and they have the utmost confidence in attaining these things. They come to the house of God to do their duty with such intentions and aspirations. So, does their performance of duty contain the sincerity, genuine faith and loyalty that God requires? At this point, one cannot yet see their genuine loyalty, faith, or sincerity, because everyone harbors an entirely transactional mindset before they do their duty; everyone makes the decision to do their duty driven by interests,**

**and also based on the precondition of their overflowing ambitions and desires. What is the antichrists' intention in doing their duty? It's to make a deal, to make an exchange. It could be said that these are the conditions they set for doing duty: 'If I do my duty, then I must obtain blessings and have a good destination. I must obtain all the blessings and benefits that god has said are prepared for humankind. If I can't obtain them, then I won't do this duty.' They come to the house of God to do their duty with such intentions, ambitions, and desires. It seems like they do have some sincerity, and of course for those who are new believers and are just starting to do their duty, it can also be called enthusiasm. But there is no genuine faith or loyalty in this; there's only that degree of enthusiasm. It can't be called sincerity. Judging from this attitude antichrists have toward doing their duty, it is wholly transactional and filled with their desires for benefits like gaining blessings, entering the kingdom of heaven, obtaining a crown, and receiving rewards. So, it appears from the outside that many antichrists, before being expelled, are doing their duty and have even forsaken more and suffered more than the average person. What they expend and the price they pay are on par with Paul, and they do no less running about than Paul either. This is something everyone can see. In terms of their behavior and their will to suffer and pay the price, they ought not to receive nothing. However, God does not regard a person based on their outward behavior, but based on their essence, their disposition, what they reveal, and the nature and essence of every single thing that they do. When people judge and treat others, they determine who they are based solely on their external behavior, how much they suffer, and what price they pay, and this is a grave mistake'' (The Word, Vol.**

**4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Nine (Part Seven)). Through what God exposed, I finally**

understood that when I was doing my duty and enthusiastically expending myself during these years, I was not truly being considerate of God's intentions and doing my duty as a created being, nor did it come from my sincerity or loyalty toward God. Rather, I had turned doing my duty into a tool and a bargaining chip used to satisfy my desire to gain blessings, doing it so I could survive in the future and enjoy eternal blessings. Seeing that disasters were occurring one after another and that God's work was almost over, I congratulated myself, thinking that since I had forsaken and expended myself for God and performed my duty, I would definitely receive His protection and end up surviving. However, when I got Covid and my condition worsened, I worried that since I was old, I might die from this virus, so I became disheartened and disappointed and lost my faith. I even started using my so-called capital to reason with God, thinking that because I'd suffered so much in my duty and produced results when spreading the gospel, God should therefore protect me. When my extravagant desires were not satisfied, I thought that God wasn't protecting me and was treating me unfairly, and I had no energy when doing my duty. When the facts were revealed, I finally saw that ever since I started believing in God, I'd been doing it to gain blessings. I said again and again that I believed in God, that performing my duty was perfectly natural and justified, but in reality, I was using and cheating God. I was truly so selfish and deceitful! I thought of Paul, who went across much of Europe spreading the gospel during the Age of Grace, enduring much suffering and converting many people. However, his expending and suffering was all so he could enter the kingdom of heaven and gain rewards. It was transactional and cheating, and not only did God disapprove of his expending, He greatly detested it. In the end, instead of being blessed by God, Paul was punished. God's disposition is righteous and holy, and when He determines our



outcome and destination, He does not judge based on how much we suffer and work on the surface, or how much good behavior we show. Rather, it is based on whether we have gained the truth and whether our disposition has changed. If I always wanted to get a good outcome and destination in exchange for running about and expending myself, not pursuing the truth or having my corruption cleansed, then my outcome would be the same as Paul's; I'd get eliminated by God and be punished. Paul's failure serves as a reminder and a warning for me! Then, I thought of how God puts His whole heart into saving mankind, expending all His effort and paying all prices, all while never requiring or demanding anything from us. God is so selfless! Meanwhile, I had enjoyed everything God bestowed upon me without ever considering His intentions. I'd even made transactions with God when doing my duty for the purpose of receiving a good destination. I was truly so selfish and despicable! I regarded God as someone to be used and cheated. Given the way I'd expended myself, how could God not detest and hate it? Understanding this, I felt self-reproachful and indebted to God, and I prayed to God in my heart, saying that I no longer wanted to make transactions with Him in order to gain blessings, and that instead I wanted to properly pursue the truth, do my duty as a created being, and satisfy Him.

Later, I read another passage of God's words that I found quite moving. Almighty God says: **"Regardless of what duty one performs, it is the most proper thing they could do, the most beautiful and just thing among humankind. As created beings, people ought to perform their duty, and only then can they receive the approval of the Creator. Created beings live under the Creator's dominion, and they accept all that is provided by God and everything that comes from God, so they should fulfill their responsibilities and obligations. This is perfectly natural and justified, and was ordained by God. From this it can be**

seen that, for people to perform the duty of a created being is more just, beautiful, and noble than anything else done while living on earth; nothing among humankind is more meaningful or worthy, and nothing brings greater meaning and worth to the life of a created person, than performing the duty of a created being. On earth, only the group of people who truly and sincerely perform the duty of a created being are those who submit to the Creator. This group does not follow worldly trends; they submit to the leadership and guidance of God, only listen to the words of the Creator, accept the truths expressed by the Creator, and live by the words of the Creator. This is the truest, most resounding testimony, and it is the best testimony of belief in God. For a created being to be able to fulfill the duty of a created being, to be able to satisfy the Creator, is the most beautiful thing among humankind, and is something that should be spread as a tale to be praised by all people. Anything the Creator entrusts to created beings should be unconditionally accepted by them; for humankind, this is a matter of both happiness and privilege, and for all those who fulfill the duty of a created being, nothing is more beautiful or worthy of commemoration—it is something positive. ... As a created being, when one comes before the Creator, they ought to perform their duty. This is a very proper thing to do, and they should fulfill this responsibility. On the basis that created beings perform their duties, the Creator has done even greater work among humankind, and He has carried out a further stage of work on people. And what work is that? He provides humankind with the truth, allowing them to gain the truth from Him as they perform their duties and thereby to cast off their corrupt dispositions and be purified. Thus, they come to satisfy God's intentions and embark on the right path in life, and, ultimately, they

**are able to fear God and shun evil, attain complete salvation, and no longer be subjected to Satan's afflictions. This is the effect that God would have humankind achieve in the end by performing their duties"**

(The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Nine (Part Seven)). After reading God's words, I understood that created beings taking up their duties before the Creator is the most meaningful and the finest thing there is. It's the same as children being filial to their parents; it's a responsibility and obligation that people should fulfill without any transactions or demands whatsoever. More importantly, in the course of doing our duties, God lays out various circumstances that reveal our corruptions and shortcomings, allowing us to seek the truth, understand ourselves, resolve our corrupt dispositions, judge people and things based on His words, no longer suffer the corruption and harm of Satan, and ultimately attain salvation; this is God's intention. Over the years, I'd been arrested by the police several times, and in the midst of my pain, it was God's words that enlightened and guided me, giving me faith and strength and allowing me to overcome the cruelty of those demons. Also, when I exalted myself and showed off in my duty, revealing an arrogant disposition, God gave rise to the circumstances to chasten and discipline me. Through what His words exposed, I gained some understanding of myself and was able to repent to Him promptly. All of this was God's salvation! God had expended so much effort on me, and yet I didn't pursue the truth or repay His love, only setting my mind on blessings when doing my duty. I truly had no conscience whatsoever. When I fell ill this time, after seeking the truth and self-reflecting, I finally saw clearly my despicable motive of only doing my duty to gain blessings all these years, also gaining some understanding of my corrupt disposition. All of this was God saving me. Now, God had given me breath and let me live, and this

was His mercy and grace. I had to let go of my intention to gain blessings and do my duty well.

Later on, I read more of God's words: **"For any person born into this world, birth is necessary and death inevitable; no one can rise above this course of things. If one wishes to depart from this world painlessly, if one wants to be able to face life's final juncture with no reluctance or worry, the only way is to leave no regrets. And the only way to depart without regrets is to know the Creator's sovereignty, to know His authority, and to submit to them. Only in this way can one stay far from human strife, from evil, from Satan's bondage, and only in this way can one live a life like Job's, guided and blessed by the Creator, a life that is free and liberated, a life with value and meaning, a life that is honest and openhearted. Only in this way can one submit, like Job, to the trials and deprivation of the Creator, to the Creator's orchestrations and arrangements. Only in this way can one worship the Creator all one's life and win His commendation, as Job did, and hear His voice, see Him appear. Only in this way can one live and die happily, like Job, with no pain, no worry, no regrets. Only in this way can one live in light, like Job, and pass every one of life's junctures in light, smoothly complete one's journey in light, successfully complete one's mission—to experience, learn, and come to know, as a created being, the Creator's sovereignty—and pass away in the light, and for ever after stand at the Creator's side as a created human being, commended by Him"** (The Word, Vol. 2. On Knowing God. God Himself, the Unique III).

After reading God's words, my heart was much brighter. Before, I'd always thought that since I was old and my illness was getting more and more serious, I was in danger of losing my life at any time, and that if I died from Covid, I wouldn't have a good outcome or destination. From God's words, I

understood that in fact, each person is going to die, but people's deaths have different natures. Some people's deaths show that they have been revealed and eliminated by God, while others' bodies may be dead on the surface, but their souls have been saved. Take Job, for instance, who had true faith in God and was able to extol God's name even amidst trials and have true testimony before Him, completing his mission as a created being. When Job died, he had no anxieties or fears, and instead he was satisfied and grateful when he left the world. His body died, but his soul was saved. There was also Peter, who pursued loving and satisfying God his whole life and was able to submit until death in the face of trials and tribulations. In the end, he was crucified upside down for God, bearing a good testimony and gaining God's approval. Now, I understood that the death of one's body does not mean they will have a bad outcome and destination. What's important is whether they're able to pursue the truth and fulfill their duty as a created being during their lifetime. This is the real key to determining whether someone ultimately has a good outcome and destination. What I ought to do was stand firm in my position as a created being and submit to God's sovereignty and arrangements. As long as I was alive, I had to rely on God and do my duty well, pursuing the truth and doing things according to the principles in the course of my duty, thereby doing my duty adequately and comforting God's heart. Understanding this, I felt much calmer, and I was no longer constrained by my illness. What I didn't expect was that several days later, my condition improved.

This experience of getting Covid helped me see that I had incorrect views in my belief, that I was doing everything for the sake of gaining blessings and making transactions with God. That I've been able to let go of some of my desire to gain blessings and straighten out my motives for doing my duty is all God's way of saving me.

## 34. What Lies Behind Negativity and Slacking Off in Duties

By Dong Xun, China

One day in 2021, the leader had me in charge of a few group gatherings. After some practice, I came to understand some principles and have some discernment of the various states that people go through. I felt that this duty was helping me understand lots of truths and make progress quickly. But later on the police started tailing the general affairs deacon and she couldn't have any contact with the others, so the leader arranged for me to handle general affairs. During that time, brothers and sisters were being arrested, one after another. There were lots of things to take care of, like transporting books, finding new host homes to shelter brothers and sisters, and so on. I was out running around practically every day, arranging all these things. After a while, I couldn't help but feel kind of moody and dissatisfied. I felt like it was just legwork, and by spending all my time running around, I couldn't gain the truth. Would I be saved if that went on? I grew opposed to general affairs work and didn't want to do it anymore.

Quite a few times I saw brothers and sisters fellowshipping in a gathering when I dropped things off at hosts' homes. I felt really wronged and even complained against the leader. Why did she put me in charge of general affairs? They were together fellowshipping on the truth, learning so much and growing quickly, but I was just running errands—how could I gain the truth? Without the truth, I wouldn't have life, and I couldn't be saved. Wasn't I losing out? I got more upset the more I thought about it, and I had no drive for my duty anymore. One time I found out about a security risk at a sister's home, and the books there had to be moved to a safe location as soon as possible. I wondered, "Why are there so many general

tasks? It takes time and energy, but I can't gain the truth. Aren't I doing all this for nothing?" I didn't want to do it when I thought about it that way. But the situation was urgent, so I had to go help move the books. Unexpectedly, right after we finished there, something came up with another home where books were being stored. While I was moving those books, it was the same process of organizing and packing all over again, and after a full day's work I was overflowing with complaints. When I dragged my weary self home, the leader and the watering deacon were in the middle of a work discussion. The leader asked me, "Weren't you just taking a sister to a new host house? Why did it take all day?" I felt really wronged to hear her say that. They were all together fellowshiping on the truth and principles while I was out running around. What could I gain just taking care of general affairs? No matter how much I did, wouldn't I end up as a laborer at best? If I could stay inside reading God's words, gathering and fellowshiping with everyone, and discussing work, wouldn't that be great? It would be easier and I could gain the truth, so I would be saved in the future. I got more and more annoyed as I thought about it, and I was left feeling very negative and utterly exhausted. I kept stewing over it: Why was I in charge of general affairs? Did God want me to be a laborer? If this went on, would I only ever be good for errands? What could I gain?

The next day there were lots of general tasks that needed handling, and I couldn't hold my complaints back. The leader noticed I wasn't in a very good state and reminded me to self-reflect and learn from this. That was a bit of a wake-up call for me. During that time managing general affairs, I was doing the work, but felt defiant inside. I was disgruntled, wanting to pick and choose my duty. I even thought God was being unfair to me. I realized that I was in a dangerous state. I couldn't keep being so resistant. I had to seek the truth and repent to God.

**I read something in God's words: "The principles you must understand and the truths you must put into practice are the same regardless of what duty you are performing. Whether you are asked to be a leader or a worker, or whether you are cooking up dishes as a host, or whether you are asked to take care of some external affairs or do some physical labor, the truth principles that should be observed in performing these different duties are the same, in that they must be based in the truth and in God's words"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Only by Seeking the Truth Principles Can One Perform One's Duty Well).

**"Many people don't know clearly what it means to be saved. Some people believe that if they have believed in God for a long time, then they are likely to be saved. Some people think that if they understand a lot of spiritual doctrines, then they are likely to be saved, or some think that leaders and workers will certainly be saved. These are all human notions and imaginings. The key thing is that people must understand what salvation means. To be saved primarily means to be freed from sin, freed from Satan's influence, and genuinely turn to God and submit to God. What must you possess to be free from sin and from Satan's influence? The truth. If people hope to obtain the truth, they must be equipped with many of God's words, they must be able to experience and practice them, so that they may understand the truth and enter into reality. Only then can they be saved. Whether or not one can be saved has nothing to do with how long they have believed in God, how much knowledge they have, whether they possess gifts or strengths, or how much they suffer. The only thing that has a direct relationship to salvation is whether or not a person can obtain the truth. So today, how many truths have you genuinely understood? And how many of God's words have become your life? Of all of God's**



**requirements, into which have you achieved entry? During your years of belief in God, how much have you entered into the reality of God's word? If you don't know, or if you have not achieved entry into the reality of any of God's words, then frankly, you have no hope of salvation. You cannot possibly be saved"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Treasuring God's Words Is the Foundation of Belief in God). From reading God's words I saw whether it's watering work or general affairs in the church, they're duties that we should do. God hopes that as we do our duty, we pursue the truth and have some life entry. Though our duties may be different, the truth principles that we practice in our duties are the same. We all show corruption, no matter what duty we do. As long as we seek the truth when we show corruption, then repent and change, we can make progress in life. Then we can gain the truth and be saved. But if we don't learn any lessons when things come up, or if what we do is unrelated to practicing the truth or changing our disposition, then God sees it as just working, and we won't gain the truth, much less God's salvation. But I mistakenly believed that I couldn't gain the truth by handling general affairs, and that no matter how much I did, I would be a laborer at best. I thought by being a leader or group leader, fellowshiping on the truth and supporting others, reading and fellowshiping on God's words every day, you'd progress in life quickly, and you could gain the truth and be saved. Wasn't that ridiculous of me? In fact, someone who really pursues the truth can learn from things they face, no matter what duty they're doing, and then make real gains afterward. It's just like in experiential testimony videos I've seen. Some brothers and sisters handle general affairs, but they're able to work on putting God's words into practice, seeking the truth and resolving corruption after it's been revealed. They can change after an experience, and are able to share their own real testimony. And there are some leaders

who often read God's words for others and help solve their problems, but don't actually practice what they preach, just speak of words and doctrines, and are eventually exposed and eliminated. These things really happen, don't they? God doesn't show favoritism because people do different duties. Those who don't pursue the truth are the ones just laboring. Someone who pursues the truth will reap a reward from any duty. God is righteous and doesn't favor anyone. But I was stuck in my fallacious views, and wanted to pick and choose duties. I was opposed to handling general affairs—I didn't want to do it. I even became biased against the leader, annoyed that she assigned me to that kind of work. I wasn't pursuing the truth. I showed corruption but didn't self-reflect or resolve it. And yet I was negative, whiny, and blaming it all on others. I thought God was just having me labor; wasn't I misunderstanding Him? I was in a very actual environment, but didn't learn a lesson. I was full of complaints. How unreasonable. If I'd gone on like that, not gaining any truth at all, I would have become an actual laborer. Some general affairs work had come my way, and I wasn't able to accept it from God and submit. I couldn't fix my own problems, much less fix other brothers' and sisters' problems. Yet, I still wanted to do watering work in that condition! Wasn't that unreasonable? I thought of something God said: **"Ultimately, whether people can attain salvation is not dependent on what duty they do, but on whether they can understand and gain the truth, and on whether they can, in the end, entirely submit to God, put themselves at the mercy of His arrangement, give no consideration to their future and destiny, and become a qualified created being. God is righteous and holy, and these are the standards He uses to measure all mankind. These standards are immutable, and you must remember this. Inscribe these standards in your mind, and at any time, do not think of finding some other path to**

**pursue some unreal thing. The requirements and standards God has for all who want to attain salvation are forever unchanging. They remain the same no matter who you are”** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Part Three). By reading God’s words I realized that whether one is handling general affairs or serving as a leader, the key is to pursue the truth as they’re carrying out their duty. People who can be saved are those who can seek the truth in the environment set up by God, and can understand themselves, repent and change. Understanding this brightened my heart.

Later, I started thinking things over again. Why was I so upset and unwilling to work when I was assigned general affairs? I read this in God’s words: **“The saddest thing about mankind’s belief in God is that man conducts his own management amidst the work of God and yet pays no heed to God’s management. Man’s biggest failure lies in how, at the same time as seeking to submit to God and worship Him, man is constructing his own ideal destination and plotting how to receive the greatest blessing and the best destination. Even if one understands how pitiable, detestable, and pathetic they are, how many can readily abandon their ideals and hopes? And who are able to halt their own steps and stop from thinking only of themselves? God needs those who will cooperate closely with Him to complete His management. He needs those who will submit to Him by devoting their entire mind and body to the work of His management. He does not need people who hold out their hands to beg from Him every day, much less those who give a little and then wait to be rewarded. God despises those who make a paltry contribution and then rest on their laurels. He hates those cold-blooded people who resent the work of His management and only want to talk about going to heaven and gaining blessings. He has an even**

**greater loathing for those who take advantage of the opportunity presented by the work He does in saving mankind. That's because these people have never cared about what God wishes to achieve and acquire through the work of His management. They are only concerned with how they can use the opportunity provided by the work of God to gain blessings. They care not about God's heart, being wholly preoccupied with their own prospects and fate. Those who resent the work of God's management and lack even the slightest interest in how God saves mankind and His intentions are only doing what pleases themselves in a way that is detached from the work of God's management. Their behavior is neither remembered nor approved of by God—much less is it favorably looked upon by God”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Appendix 3: Man Can Only Be Saved Amidst God's Management). God's words revealed my own state. I was reluctant to handle general affairs because I didn't have the right motivation in my duty. I was doing it so I could be blessed, always calculating the gains and losses in my heart. I eagerly paid any price when something would benefit me, but as soon as I saw I'd been assigned to general affairs and I might just be a laborer, I felt like that would be a big loss. I pulled a long face and grumbled, and though I did some work, I was disgruntled about it. I was living by satanic philosophies, like “Every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost,” “Always come out ahead,” and “Never lift a finger without a reward.” “Reward” always came first, and even expending myself for God was conducting a transaction with Him. From start to finish, I wasn't giving a thought to how to do my duty well. Even in those harsh conditions, my first consideration wasn't protecting the brothers, sisters and church property, moving them all to safety as soon as possible, but rather whether doing that work was worth it, if it would be beneficial for my destination. I saw how Satan corrupted

me to be so selfish and vile, without any conscience or reason. I was so cold-hearted, just in it for myself. I was a member of the church, so whatever project needed to be done, I should have cooperated to protect the church's interests. But I was really goal-oriented in everything I did. I felt like I'd really lose out if I wasn't blessed after working so hard. My head was full of thoughts of how I could be blessed and come out ahead. The facts showed me that the motivation for my years of effort in the faith was just a desire for blessings. That reminded me of what God said: **"Even men who show kindness to others are repaid, and yet Christ, who has done such work among you, has received neither man's love nor his recompense and submission. Is this not something heartrending?"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Those Who Are Incompatible With Christ Are Surely Opponents of God). I felt even more regretful and terrible in the face of God's words. I'd eaten and drunk so much of God's word, and enjoyed so much of God's watering and provision, but never thought of repaying God's love by doing my duty well. I was single-mindedly focused on taking. I was insatiably reaching out to God for blessings, wanting Him to give me a good destination. I was petulant when I didn't get that, and full of complaints when I did the slightest duty. My conscience and reason had grown so numb, and it was really hurtful to God. As I thought about it, I felt more indebted and guilty. I hated myself for being so devoid of conscience and humanity.

I read something else in God's words later: **"In God's house, whenever something is arranged for you to do, be it a hardship or tiring work, and whether you like it or not, it is your duty. If you can consider it a commission and responsibility that God has given you, you are then relevant to His work of saving man. And if what you do and the duty you perform are relevant to God's work of saving man, and**

**you can earnestly and sincerely accept the commission God has given you, how will He regard you? He will regard you as a member of His family. Is that a blessing or a curse? (A blessing.) It is a great blessing”**

(The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. What Is the Adequate Performance of Duty?). This passage was really moving for me. As long as someone is willing to do a duty, God will give them a chance. All jobs in the church are meaningful, even those that seem unimpressive. They should all be accepted and taken as your own duty and responsibility. If you try to pursue the truth in your duty, and do it properly in line with what God requires, you'll have a chance at salvation. If you treat your duty like a transaction, like capital to exchange for blessings or a ticket into God's kingdom, no matter how hard you work, you'll never enter into the truth, because your views toward pursuit and the path you're on are wrong. Having an opportunity to do a duty, and to labor for God's work, is God's elevation and an enormous blessing. So how could I be picky about my duty? I should've accepted it and submitted. That's what I, as a created being, should have done. But I was blind to the blessings I was surrounded by, and wasn't treasuring my chance to pursue the truth through this duty. I was treating my duty like hard work, as a bargaining chip in a transaction with God, and I misunderstood and blamed God. I was so blind. Realizing this, I no longer felt opposed to handling general affairs. I felt genuinely willing to accept it and submit and do that duty well.

There was another passage of God's words I read: **“In the doing of their duties, people use the pursuit of the truth to experience the work of God, gradually understand and accept the truth, and then practice the truth. They then reach a state where they cast off their corrupt disposition, get rid of the bonds and control of the corrupt disposition of Satan, and so they become someone who has the truth reality and**

**someone with a normal humanity. Only when you have normal humanity will your performance of your duty and your actions be edifying to people and satisfactory to God. And only when people are approved of by God for their performance of their duty can they be an acceptable created being. So, regarding the performing of your duty, although that which you now expend and bring out in devotion are the various skills and learning and knowledge that you have acquired, it is precisely through the channel of performing your duty that you can understand the truth, and know what it is to perform one's duty, what it is to come before God, what it is to wholeheartedly expend for God. Through this channel, you will know how to cast off your corrupt disposition, and how to rebel against yourselves, not to be arrogant and self-righteous, and to submit to the truth and God. Only thus can you achieve salvation"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. To Gain the Truth, One Must Learn From the People, Events, and Things Nearby).

I learned from God's words that doing a duty is the path to changing one's disposition and gaining the truth. It has no relation to being blessed or gaining benefits. Whatever duty you do, pursuing the truth and focusing on dispositional change is the only right path. The reason I wasn't learning anything from general affairs work was because I wasn't pursuing the truth or working on life entry. It had nothing to do with what duty I did. I thought general affairs work was just toil. When I showed corruption, I didn't focus on seeking the truth and resolving it. I was negative and slacked off in my duty, and though I did the job, I didn't gain anything, and my disposition never changed at all. There's no way I would ever be saved if that had gone on. Realizing that gave me a path of practice. Whether it was handling general affairs or watering and supporting brothers and sisters, I couldn't keep treating it like a task. I had to focus on praying and seeking the truth principles, and when

I showed corruption, I had to self-reflect and seek the truth to resolve it. After practicing this way for a while, before I knew it, I understood myself better and gained a more real understanding of the truth.

I remember a time when a sister always asked me to join her in anything she was planning. She even asked me to help with simple things that she could do on her own. When she asked me again, I corrected my mindset, and wasn't resistant because of how much work I had to do. As we were working together, I noticed she didn't shoulder a real burden in her duty, and was greedy for comforts. I wanted to point that out to her, but I was afraid that she might feel like I was hard to get along with, so I was considerate of her flesh. I figured I could pick up the slack—I didn't mention it or fellowship with her. Later, after reading God's words and reflecting on myself, I realized I was being a people-pleaser. It looked like I was being considerate and understanding, but in fact, I had my own motive, and that was to give her a good impression of me. That wouldn't benefit her life and would cause her to always rely on me. At that point I opened up to her and told her about my corruption, and also mentioned her own issues. She made some changes after that, becoming more active in her duty and less dependent on me.

These experiences taught me that I can understand the truth and enter into it no matter what kind of duty I do. God really doesn't show anyone favoritism. At the same time, I also realized that no matter what job I do or what situation I face, being able to seek the truth and put it into practice is what matters.



## 35. Why I Was So Arrogant

By Joanne, South Korea

One day a couple of church leaders raised an issue with me. They said Isabella, who was in charge of the gospel work, wasn't principled in her actions and that she didn't discuss things with church leaders. They said that she just randomly reassigned people to share the gospel, impacting the work that brothers and sisters were dealing with at the time and disrupting church work. Without a moment's reflection I said, "Isabella must have changed people's duties around to meet work needs." One of the leaders said, "Isabella lacks caliber and isn't competent in her job. Staffing arrangements aren't being done properly and the others aren't happy about it. It has put some people into a negative state and impacted our gospel work. Isn't she unfit for managing this work?" I felt really annoyed when I heard that they wanted her replaced, and I replied, "What? If Isabella isn't in charge of the gospel work, are you going to be able to find anyone better? Do we have anyone suitable? These issues you mention are definitely present, but they're nothing too critical. She gets results in gospel work—we can't dismiss her over such minor things! We need to safeguard the church's work." As I refuted the church leaders, I was thinking that they were nitpicking, and that no one is perfect. We're all corrupt and flawed, so is it right to criticize someone for not getting everything exactly right? Why wouldn't they put work results first? What if we dismissed her and the results of the gospel work slipped? That might make me look like I couldn't do actual work, like a false leader. Then what would the others think of me? And would our senior leader replace me when he found out? The two church leaders I was talking with were left speechless by my response. Finally, one of them said, "Well, let's keep her in place for now." A few

days later, the senior leader got in touch with me and asked me how Isabella was doing in her duty. I said, “She’s doing okay. She’s accomplishing some things in her work, and really gets things done.” Then the leader asked me, “So what are these accomplishments you mention? Have you examined in detail how many people she’s actually gained through gospel work? Do you know she’s been padding her numbers? Her caliber is low and she lacks ability. She can’t resolve problems. Are you aware of that? Do you know that she’s been assigning people without observing principles, disrupting the gospel work?” Facing one question after another, my heart was pounding and my mind went blank. Seeing I couldn’t answer a single question, the leader went on: “You’re very convinced that you’re in the right! People who are like that lack self-awareness. If you really knew yourself, why wouldn’t you rebel against yourself? Why wouldn’t you deny yourself? Other people have clearly raised this issue, but you haven’t accepted it. Quite arrogant, wouldn’t you say? Do you have the truth reality? Someone who genuinely has the truth reality doesn’t believe they are always right. They are able to listen when other people are right. They can accept and submit to the truth. That’s someone with normal humanity. But how about the kind of person who’s incredibly arrogant? Can they accept the truth? People who are arrogant don’t accept the truth and won’t ever submit to the truth. They don’t know themselves, they’re unable to rebel against themselves, and they really can’t put the truth into practice or uphold the truth principles. They can’t get along with others. They are people whose dispositions haven’t changed. From all this we can see that arrogant people are unreconstructed old Satans. You need to reflect on whether you’re that kind of person.” I was stunned at the time, and afterward I just sat there, going over in my mind what he’d said: They don’t accept the truth, they won’t ever submit to the truth, they can’t get along

with others, their dispositions haven't changed, and they are unreconstructed old Satans. The more I thought about this the worse I felt, and my tears flowed freely. In my pain, I prayed through the tears, "Oh God! I never thought I was the kind of person who was arrogant, and who wouldn't accept the truth. Please guide me to self-reflect and know myself."

Then one day in my devotionals, I read this in God's words: **"Arrogance is the root of man's corrupt disposition. The more arrogant people are, the more unreasonable they are, and the more unreasonable they are, the more liable they are to resist God. How serious is this problem? Not only do people with an arrogant disposition consider everyone else beneath them, but, worst of all, they are even condescending toward God, and they have no God-fearing hearts. Even though people might appear to believe in God and follow Him, they do not treat Him as God at all. They always feel that they possess the truth and think the world of themselves. This is the essence and root of the arrogant disposition, and it comes from Satan. Therefore, the problem of arrogance must be resolved. Feeling that one is better than others—that is a trivial matter. The critical issue is that one's arrogant disposition prevents one from submitting to God, His sovereignty, and His arrangements; such a person always feels inclined to compete with God for power and control others. This sort of person does not have a God-fearing heart in the slightest, to say nothing of loving God or submitting to Him. People who are arrogant and conceited, especially those who are so arrogant as to have lost their reason, cannot submit to God in their belief in Him, and even exalt and bear testimony for themselves. Such people resist God the most and have absolutely no God-fearing hearts. If people wish to get to where they have God-fearing hearts, then they must first resolve their arrogant disposition.**

**The more thoroughly you resolve your arrogant disposition, the more you will have a God-fearing heart, and only then can you submit to Him and obtain the truth and know Him. Only those who gain the truth are genuinely human”** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Part Three). God’s words were pretty enlightening for me. It’s true. Arrogance is the root of corruption. Being arrogant, I considered myself better than others, and even worse than that, I was blind to God. When issues arose I didn’t come before God and seek His intention, nor did I seek the truth principles, but imperiously demanded that everyone listen to me. I thought back on the church leaders’ feedback to me on Isabella’s issues. I refuted everything that they said without giving it any thought. They said Isabella was unprincipled, that she randomly reassigned people without talking to church leaders, disrupting things to the point that people didn’t know what duty they should do. I was entirely in denial about this issue and wouldn’t listen at all. I totally defended Isabella, saying she acted that way because the gospel work urgently needed people, and that it was called for. The church leaders said she was of low caliber and lacked ability for the job, and wasn’t suited for managing our gospel work. I didn’t find out about the actual situation or consider whether she should be dismissed based on principle. Instead, I pushed back and got annoyed. I queried why Isabella shouldn’t be in charge, and asked the church leaders if they could find a better supervisor than her, and in this way I browbeat them into silence. By raising this issue, the church leaders were being responsible and upholding the church’s work, yet I felt throughout that I understood the truth better than them. I felt that I had more insight while they had only a shallow understanding of the truth and weren’t seeing things correctly, and so I didn’t need to listen to them. How arrogant and imperious! I dug my heels in, refusing to accept the truth—not even a single correct statement. I

refuted every single thing they said, arguing until they stopped expressing their opinions. I was arrogant beyond all reason and didn't have a God-fearing heart at all. I wasn't using people according to principle and had already hurt the work of the church. Not only did I fail to acknowledge my mistakes, but I lashed out instead, accusing the church leaders of fault-finding and treating Isabella unfairly. Wasn't I just an unreconstructed old Satan whose disposition had not undergone the least transformation? How could I get along normally with other people and cooperate harmoniously? I felt really bad when I thought about it that way, and I prayed to God, willing to repent and promptly get a grip on the situation with Isabella. After actually looking into things, I learned that Isabella was being deceptive in her reporting and making a hash of things, and that lots of new believers weren't attending gatherings because she hadn't assigned waterers. Isabella's caliber was low to begin with, but she was also arrogant and dictatorial, and didn't discuss her work with anyone. When problems cropped up she couldn't resolve them and didn't take others' suggestions, so lots of issues weren't addressed for a long time, hindering the progress of gospel work. In the face of these facts I finally acknowledged I'd chosen the wrong person. When the church leaders suggested replacing her I disagreed and I browbeat them into submission. The more I thought about this the worse I felt, hating myself for being so arrogant and for always assuming I was in the right. I came before God in prayer, asking Him to guide me to understand the essence of my problem.

Afterward, I read a passage of God's words that addressed my issue of arrogance. Almighty God says: **"Being arrogant and self-righteous is man's most conspicuous satanic disposition, and if people do not accept the truth, they will have no way of cleansing it. People all have arrogant and self-righteous dispositions, and they are always conceited. No**

**matter what they think, or what they say, or how they see things, they always think that their own points of view and their own attitudes are correct, and that what others say is not as good or as right as what they say. They always cling to their own opinions, and no matter who speaks, they will not listen to them. Even if what someone else says is correct, or in line with the truth, they will not accept it; they will only appear to be listening but they will not really adopt the idea, and when it comes time to act, they will still do things their own way, always thinking that what they say is right and reasonable. It is possible that what you say is, indeed, right and reasonable, or that what you have done is right and faultless, but what kind of disposition have you revealed? Is it not one of arrogance and self-righteousness? If you do not cast off this arrogant and self-righteous disposition, will it not affect your performance of your duty? Will it not affect your practice of the truth? If you do not resolve your arrogant and self-righteous disposition, will it not cause you serious setbacks in the future? You will definitely experience setbacks, this is inevitable. Tell Me, can God see such behavior of man? God is more than able to see it! God not only scrutinizes the depths of people's hearts, He also observes their every word and deed at all times and places. What will God say when He sees this behavior of yours? God will say: 'You are intransigent! It's understandable that you might cling to your own ideas when you do not know that you are mistaken, but when you clearly know that you are mistaken and you still cling to your ideas, and would die before repenting, you are just a stubborn fool, and you are in trouble. If, no matter who makes a suggestion, you always adopt a negative, resistant attitude toward it, and do not accept even a little bit of the truth, and if your heart is completely resistant, closed, and dismissive, then you are**

**so ridiculous, you are an absurd person! You are too difficult to deal with!’ In what way are you difficult to deal with? You are difficult to deal with because what you are displaying is not an erroneous approach, or an erroneous behavior, but a revelation of your disposition. A revelation of what disposition? A disposition in which you are averse to the truth, and hate the truth. Once you have been identified as a person who hates the truth, in God’s eyes you are in trouble, and He will spurn and ignore you. From people’s perspective, the most they will say is: ‘This person’s disposition is bad, they are incredibly obstinate, intransigent, and arrogant! This person is hard to get along with and does not love the truth. They have never accepted the truth and they do not put the truth into practice.’ At the most, everyone will give you this appraisal, but can this appraisal decide your fate? The appraisal that people give you cannot decide your fate, but there is one thing that you must not forget: God scrutinizes people’s hearts, and at the same time God observes their every word and deed. If God defines you in this way, and says that you hate the truth, if He does not merely say that you have a bit of a corrupt disposition, or that you are a little disobedient, is this not a very serious problem? (It is serious.) This means trouble, and this trouble does not lie in the way that people see you, or how they appraise you, it lies in how God views your corrupt disposition of hating the truth. So, how does God view it? Has God merely determined that you hate and do not love the truth, and that is all? Is it that simple? Where does the truth come from? Who does the truth represent? (It represents God.) Ponder on this: If a person hates the truth, then from God’s perspective, how will He view them? (As His enemy.) Is this not a serious problem? When a person hates the truth, they hate God!’” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last**

Days. Only by Often Living Before God Can One Have a Normal Relationship With Him). The revelation of God's words had a big impact on me. I saw the ugly corruption of my arrogance. A couple of sisters had offered some suggestions about someone I'd selected, but I simply didn't accept it—because I felt I was in the right. I didn't even give them a chance to talk, just kept on chiding and browbeating them. I said so many arrogant things, until they had to back off. That wasn't simply an error in my approach and behavior. It came from the satanic disposition of being averse to and hating the truth. I felt revolted—it was like swallowing something really disgusting—when I thought about the way I'd spoken and acted when pushing back against those leaders. I felt incredibly ashamed, like a wretched fool. In God's eyes, being averse to and hating the truth is hating God and being His enemy, and all enemies of God are devils and Satans. The senior leader was absolutely correct in exposing me as an unreconstructed old Satan. That's my nature essence. Facing issues with resistance and denial; not accepting the truth; doing my duty in accordance with my corrupt, satanic disposition. How could this not amount to resisting God, and how could I not be pruned for it? At that point I realized that being pruned in that way was God's righteousness. Although being exposed and pruned wounded my pride and was hard for me, it helped me to see my arrogant nature, and it gave me a bit of a God-fearing heart.

Later, I read more of God's words that gave me a better understanding of and discernment about my state. Almighty God says: **“No matter what it is they're doing, antichrists always have their own aims and intentions, they are always acting according to their own plan, and their attitude toward the arrangements and work of the house of God is, ‘You may have a thousand plans, but I have one rule’; this is all determined by the nature of antichrists. Can antichrists change their**



mentality and act according to the truth principles? That would be absolutely impossible, unless the Above directly demands them to do so, in which case they will be able to reluctantly do a bit, out of necessity. If they did nothing at all, they would be exposed and dismissed. It is only under these circumstances that they are able to do a bit of real work. This is the attitude that antichrists have toward doing duties; this is also the attitude they have toward practicing the truth: When practicing the truth is beneficial to them, when everyone will approve of them and admire them for it, they are sure to oblige, and make some token efforts that appear just about acceptable to others. If practicing the truth is of no benefit to them, if no one sees it, and the superior leaders don't see it, then at such times there is no question of them practicing the truth. Their practicing of the truth depends on the context and situation, and they consider how they can do this in a way that will be visible to others, and how great the benefits will be; they have an ingenious grasp of these things, and they can adapt to different situations. They are at all times considering their own fame, gain and status, and not showing any consideration whatsoever for the intentions of God, and in this they fall short of practicing the truth and upholding the principles. Antichrists only pay attention to their own fame, gain, status, personal interests, and their not gaining any benefit or putting themselves on display is unacceptable, and the practice of the truth is troublesome for them. If their efforts are not recognized, and even if they are working before others their work is not seen, then they won't practice any truth at all. If the work is arranged directly by the house of God, and they have no choice but to do it, still they take into consideration whether this will benefit their status and reputation. If it is good for their status and can

improve their reputation, they put everything they have into this work and make a good job of it; they feel they are killing two birds with one stone. If it is of no benefit to their fame, gain, and status, and doing it badly could discredit them, they think of a way or excuse to get out of it. No matter what duty antichrists perform, they always stick to the same principle: They must make some gain in terms of reputation, status, or their interests, and they must not incur any losses. The kind of work antichrists like most is when they don't have to suffer or pay any price, and there is a benefit to their reputation and status. In sum, no matter what they're doing, antichrists first consider their own interests, and they only act once they've thought it all out; they do not truly, sincerely, and absolutely submit to the truth without compromise, but do so selectively and conditionally. What condition is this? It is that their status and reputation must be safeguarded, and must not suffer any loss. Only after this condition is satisfied will they decide and choose what to do. That is, antichrists give serious consideration to how to treat the truth principles, God's commissions, and the work of God's house, or how to deal with the things they face. They do not consider how to satisfy God's intentions, how to keep from damaging the interests of God's house, how to satisfy God, or how to benefit the brothers and sisters; these are not the things they consider. What do antichrists consider? Whether their own status and reputation will be affected, and whether their prestige will be lowered. If doing something according to the truth principles benefits the work of the church and the brothers and sisters, but would cause their own reputation to suffer and cause many people to realize their true stature and know what sort of nature essence they have, then they will definitely not act in accordance with the truth principles. If doing some real work will cause

**more people to think highly of them, look up to them and admire them, allow them to gain even greater prestige, or enable their words to carry authority and make more people submit to them, then they will choose to do it that way; otherwise, they will never choose to disregard their own interests out of consideration for the interests of God's house or of the brothers and sisters. This is the nature essence of antichrists"** (The

Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Nine (Part Three)). God's words showed me that resisting and getting annoyed when others mentioned Isabella's issues, and not agreeing to replace her, wasn't just because of an arrogant disposition. Hidden behind that were my selfish, vile motives. I refused to accept those two leaders' suggestions just so that I could protect my standing in the church. But they were right about Isabella's issues. She wasn't well-suited to be a supervisor and was already hindering our gospel work. I should have dismissed her right away, but instead I found all kinds of reasons for blocking that course of action so I could maintain my status. As a result, the two church leaders didn't know how to arrange things suitably, and this further impeded our gospel work. My arrogance, my failure to uphold the work of the church, and my prioritizing of my own personal status all had an impact on our gospel work and on the entry into life of the brothers and sisters. I was disrupting the work of the church. I paid lip service to upholding the work of the church, but in fact, it was all about upholding my own status. As long as I could protect my standing in the church, even if someone I'd selected had issues and the church's work was being hindered, I turned a blind eye. I was ready to see the church's interests suffer if it meant I could protect my own status. Isn't that antichrist behavior? Through the judgment and revelation of God's words I saw my anti-God nature essence, and clearly saw my own vile motives. At that point I felt kind of

afraid, and was willing to repent to God, to stop doing evil and resisting Him out of arrogance.

In my devotionals once, I read a passage of God's words. Almighty God says: **"When other people voice dissenting opinions, how can you practice in order to keep from being arbitrary and rash? You must first have an attitude of humility, set aside what you believe to be right, and let everyone fellowship. Even if you believe your way to be correct, you should not keep insisting on it. That is a kind of step forward; it shows an attitude of seeking the truth, of denying yourself, and of satisfying God's intentions. Once you have this attitude, at the same time as not adhering to your own opinions, you should pray, seek the truth from God, and then look for a basis in God's words—determine how to act based on God's words. This is the most suitable and accurate practice. When you seek the truth and hold up a problem for everyone to fellowship and seek on together, that is when the Holy Spirit provides enlightenment. God enlightens people according to principles, He takes stock of their attitude. If you stubbornly stick to your guns regardless of whether your view is right or wrong, God will hide His face from you and ignore you; He will make you hit a wall to reveal you and expose your ugly state. If, on the other hand, your attitude is correct, neither insistent on your own way, nor self-righteous, nor arbitrary and rash, but an attitude of seeking and of accepting the truth, if you fellowship with everyone, then the Holy Spirit will begin to work among you, and perhaps He will lead you to understanding by means of someone's words. Sometimes, when the Holy Spirit enlightens you, He leads you to understand the crux of a matter with just a few words or phrases, or by giving you an idea. You realize, in that instant, that whatever you have been clinging to is erroneous, and, in the same instant, you understand**

**the most appropriate way to act. Having reached such a level, have you not successfully avoided doing evil, and at the same time avoided bearing the consequences of a mistake? Is this not God's protection? (Yes.) How is such a thing achieved? This is only attained when you have a God-fearing heart, and when you seek the truth with a heart of submission. Once you have received the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit and determined the principles of practice, your practice will be in line with the truth, and you will be able to satisfy God's intentions"**

(The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Part Three). God's words gave me a path of practice. To not commit evil in my duty or disrupt the work of the church, what's key is having a truth-seeking attitude when issues crop up and a God-fearing heart, and being able to cooperate with others, and, when I encounter different opinions, to put myself aside, pray, and seek. That's the only way to gain the work of the Holy Spirit, do things correctly, and minimize errors. Understanding this was enlightening for me, and I knew how to proceed. I dismissed Isabella after that, and a new supervisor was selected. After a little while, the gospel work noticeably improved. I felt even more remorseful when I saw these results. I was disgusted with my earlier arrogance, and how I'd willfully kept Isabella in place, disrupting the work of the church and committing a transgression. I said a prayer that I was ready to seek the truth in all things, no longer acting in my old imperious ways and living with such an arrogant disposition.

Before too long I encountered another situation. In a work discussion with several gospel deacons, I made some suggestions which were promptly dismissed by everyone else. I was feeling a little humiliated and was wondering if what I had said was totally off base. Was everything the others said right? What would the others think of me, as a leader, if my views were completely rejected? They'd certainly think I didn't understand the truth

and lacked reality. Would they listen to me after that? Would I still have the prestige of a leader in people's eyes? At this thought, I again had the urge to refute what others had said so that I could keep face. Then I felt really guilty, realizing that I wasn't in the right state. I silently prayed to God, "Oh God, I know they're right, but I feel my pride is wounded and I want to protect my standing again. Please watch over me and help me accept my brothers' and sisters' correct suggestions, following the truth principles and not living in my corruption." I read these words from God after my prayer:

**"One must discuss everything they do with others. Listen first to what everyone else has to say. If the majority view is right and accords with the truth, you should accept it and obey it. Whatever you do, do not spout high-sounding views. Doing so is never a good thing, in any group of people. ... You should often fellowship with others, making suggestions and expressing your own views—this is your duty and your freedom. But in the end, when a decision is to be made, if it is you alone who makes the final verdict, having everyone do as you say and go along with your will, then you are violating the principles. ... If nothing is clear to you and you have no opinion, learn to listen and obey, and to seek the truth. This is the duty you should perform; this is a well-behaved attitude. If you have no opinions of your own and are always afraid of looking foolish, of not being able to distinguish yourself, and of being humiliated—if you fear being disdained by the others and having no place in their hearts, and so you always try to force yourself into the spotlight and always want to spout high-sounding ideas, putting forward some absurd assertions that do not correspond with reality, which you would have others accept—are you performing your duty? (No.) What are you doing? You are being destructive"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Part Three). God's words were

enlightening. Fellowshiping with others and expressing opinions and suggestions were part of my duty and my responsibilities, but getting everyone to do what I wanted and listen to me was just arrogance. In work discussions, everyone has the right to express their opinion, and we should go with what is in line with the truth principles and benefits the work of the church. That's a truth-accepting attitude. After that I started focusing on practicing the truth, and when different opinions came up in work discussions, I'd inquire further into people's ideas to reach a consensus that we could then implement. I remember once, I finished doing something on my own and I felt a little uneasy. Through prayer and reflection, I realized that I hadn't spoken with my partners to reach a consensus, and that wasn't the right approach. I opened up to everyone in fellowship that I was arrogant, that I hadn't discussed things before making a decision, and that I'd been unreasonable in this respect. I said that I'd change and stop doing things in that way. I also asked everyone to help monitor me. I felt that putting myself aside in this way, and practicing the truth, brought me peace of mind.

I practiced doing that in the next few work discussions and found that I was handling things better, without any particular problems coming up. I was so grateful to God. Through this I experienced that by not being arrogant in a duty and cooperating well with others, you can gain the Holy Spirit's work and you're more likely to get things done. Now I have some understanding of my arrogant corrupt disposition. I can practice the truth and I've changed a bit. This is the fruit of God's words.

## 36. Tortured for Delivering Books

By Guo Qiang, China

I was driving very late one night in the winter of 2015, on my way to deliver some books of God's words. At a curve on a mountain road, I saw that police were inspecting vehicles in the distance, with three police cars to the side of them. My heart skipped a beat: "Oh no! I have over a hundred books in the truck. If the police find these, I'm done for." But headlights are incredibly obvious at night, so if I stopped and turned around at that point, the police would certainly come to check me out. It also happened to be snowing then; the mountain road was slippery, and it was a narrow road, making it very difficult to turn around—I had no choice but to continue forward. Feeling really nervous, I quickly said a prayer to God, asking Him to watch over my heart and help me calm down. It occurred to me that I had the cellphone used for contacting brothers and sisters with me as well, so I immediately slowed down, destroyed my cellphone and SIM card, then tossed them out the window. When I got to where the police were, one of them asked me what I had in the truck. I said, "Potatoes." Just then two more officers walked over and climbed into the bed of the truck. Watching in the rearview mirror, I saw them lift up bag after bag of those potatoes, discover the boxes hidden underneath them, and pull out several books. My mind started whirling, and I thought, "That's it. I've been caught this time. These books of God's words are so important, so precious for our pursuit of the truth. I have to protect them, even if it costs me my life—I can't let them fall into the police's hands." So I slammed the car into gear and floored it, wanting to rush out of there. But since the snow was making the road so slick, the wheels just skidded and I was stuck. Just then, an officer took something out of a police car and threw it, breaking my windshield.



The two officers standing on either side of the truck grabbed the doors and smashed both windows, opened the doors, and then started beating me like mad with their batons all over my head and body while trying to pull me out of the vehicle. One of them got in and kicked me down to the ground, cuffed my hands to my feet on both sides, then gave me a vicious beating. Since it was winter, the officers were all wearing really tough, thick police boots. When they kicked me, it felt like my flesh was being ripped off. They then stuffed me into a police car with my hands and feet still cuffed, and put me in the space between the front and back seats with my head facing down. It felt like my neck was going to snap—I was in so much pain, my clothing was completely soaked with sweat.

I was in a state of internal chaos. I didn't know what sort of torture the police were going to subject me to. Would they beat me to death, or render me disabled? Would they sentence me to prison? Would I ever see my family again? I got more scared the more I thought about it. As I was thinking about all this, I suddenly realized that in the face of oppression and hardship, the only things on my mind were my own flesh and safety, not how to stand firm in my testimony to satisfy God. I quickly said a prayer: "God, I'm afraid of being beaten and being sent to jail. Please give me faith. I want to stand firm in my testimony for You." After my prayer, I remembered a hymn of God's words.

## **Trials Call for Faith**

**1 While undergoing trials, it is normal for people to be weak, or to have negativity within them, or to lack clarity on God's intentions or their path for practice. But in any case, you must have faith in God's work, and not deny God, just like Job. ...**

**2 ... People's faith is required when something cannot be seen by the naked eye, and your faith is required when you cannot let go of your own notions. When you do not have clarity about God's work, what is required of you is to have faith and to take a firm stance and stand strong in your testimony. When Job reached this point, God appeared to him and spoke to him. That is, it is only from within your faith that you will be able to see God, and when you have faith God will perfect you.**

—The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Those Who Are to Be Made Perfect  
Must Undergo Refinement

I thought then that I wanted to follow Job's example and leave everything in God's hands. Though I'd fallen into the police's clutches, without God's permission they couldn't take my life. I had to have faith in God, and no matter how great my suffering and even if I ended up dying, I had to stand firm in my testimony for God and humiliate Satan.

They took me to a police station, where two officers dragged me forward by each of my feet. My whole back was facing the floor and the weight of my entire body was on the handcuffs, which were digging into the flesh of my wrists and ankles. It felt like my wrists were snapping with the force. They dragged me into a room and tossed me roughly like a sack into a corner. Every single part of me was in so much pain, I was struggling to breathe. A couple of officers came over after a little bit and started roughly kicking me in the head and stomping on me, and one said furiously, "You think you're so great, daring to deliver religious books? I just might beat you to death!" In the hours that followed, police officers kept on coming in, punching and kicking me while shouting vile things. With those thick police boots, every single kick was horribly painful. With my hands and feet cuffed, there was no way for me to avoid them—I just had to take it. I

remembered these words of God: **“You should know these are the last days. Devils and Satan, like roaring lions, stalk abroad, searching for people to devour”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Utterances of Christ in the Beginning, Chapter 28). The Chinese constitution clearly grants freedom of belief, and all I was doing was delivering books of God’s words. I hadn’t broken any laws, but the police had taken me in and were threatening my life with their beatings. The Communist Party truly is a demon that resists God! They were beating me like that so I’d become a Judas and betray God—I couldn’t fall for Satan’s tricks. No matter how much I suffered, I had to lean on God, stand firm in my testimony for God, and shame Satan.

I was being beaten to the point that I was in a semi-conscious state most of the time. I don’t know when the police uncuffed me, but when I came to, I noticed that my left hand and left foot were tied together, as were my right hand and right foot. There was also a rope that went from behind my neck and was wrapped around my thighs several times. They had tied me up like a knot, leaning against the corner. My entire body hurt, it was a struggle to breathe, and my head was painfully swollen. Officers were still coming in and beating me without reprieve. Sometimes two would each stand on opposite sides of me and kick me back and forth like a soccer ball. I was in a daze. When they hit me more lightly, I didn’t feel it anymore. When they hit me really hard or in a place that had already been wounded, I’d feel a bit of a shiver, sort of like an electric current running through me. When I occasionally came to, I realized that every single part of my body was in pain. Lying on the ice-cold floor, thirsty and hungry and aching all over, I wondered when the police would be done with this endless beating. I felt that death would be better than that torment, because at least I wouldn’t have to suffer that way. In my state of haziness and confusion, a hymn called “Following Christ Is Ordained by God” suddenly came to mind very

clearly: “God has ordained that we follow Christ and go through trials and tribulations. If we truly love God, we should submit to His sovereignty and arrangements. To go through trials and tribulations is to be blessed by God, and God says that the rougher the path we walk, the more it can show our love. The path we walk today was preordained by God. To follow Christ of the last days is the greatest blessing of all” (Follow the Lamb and Sing New Songs). That’s right. How many paths we must walk and how much we suffer in this life is all predetermined by God—no one can escape this. Undergoing this sort of oppression and hardship looked like a bad thing on the surface, but in fact, it was beneficial for my growth in life and could help perfect my faith. I’d gotten through a number of dangerous situations before, so I’d thought that I already had stature and faith, that I could suffer and expend myself for God. But when faced with the police’s brutal torment, I was afraid I’d be beaten to the point of death or disability, afraid I’d be sentenced to prison. All I thought about was my own fleshly interests and my own safety. When things got too painful, I had even wished to escape it through death. At this point I realized how pitiful my faith was, that I lacked true stature and even more, lacked love for God. This hardship and oppression also made me see the great red dragon’s evil and brutal demonic nature more clearly. The Communist Party boasts about its freedom of belief to outsiders, but in fact, it madly arrests and persecutes believers and treats them like enemies. All of us were created by God, so having faith and worshiping God is right and natural, yet these police officers arrest believers and drive us to death’s door. The Communist Party truly is a demon that resists God! I’d gained greater discernment of the Communist Party’s essence. I thought of something God said: **“God braved dangers several thousand times greater than those during the Age of Grace to come down to the land where the great red dragon dwells to do His own**

**work, expending all His thought and care, to redeem this group of impoverished people, this group of people mired in a dung heap”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Work and Entry (4)). I had read that before, but didn’t have a real understanding of it. It wasn’t until this arrest that I personally appreciated how extremely difficult it was for God to work in China for man’s salvation. As just a believer following God and doing my duty, I was subjected to this kind of brutal mistreatment by the Communist Party—how far would this gang of demons take their brutality against God incarnate? But even in such a dangerous environment, God still continues to express truths, doing His utmost for humanity’s salvation. His love for us is so great! Pondering God’s love was incredibly moving and encouraging for me. I silently resolved that no matter what tactics the great red dragon employed to torture me, I would lean on God and stand firm in my testimony; if I made it out alive someday, I would continue to follow God and fulfill my duty to satisfy Him. I felt much calmer with the faith and strength that God’s words gave to me. My imagination was no longer running wild, and though I was suffering physically, I felt at peace in my heart.

After some time—I have no idea how long—an officer came over and kicked me twice to see if I was still alive or not. I was still tied up and huddled in the corner, and couldn’t even lift my head. All I could see were his feet. The officer asked me, “Are you aware of what books you were delivering?” I said, “Yes.” Then he said, “Are you a believer?” I responded, “I am.” After that he kept demanding over and over again to know where the books had come from, where I was taking them, how I contacted the others, how many batches of books I’d delivered, and so on. Seeing I refused to say anything, he came over, kicked me a couple of times and said, “You’d better speak up! Tell us everything and we’ll let you go—no

more beatings!” Over the next few days, they interrogated me with those questions nonstop, and when they didn’t get any answers, beat me over and over. I remember one time while they were questioning me, I raised my head to see what they looked like. As a result, a cop punched me in the face, then grabbed a police baton that was sitting on a table and used it to hit me on the neck. I fainted right there. I have no idea how many times I passed out in the days I was there. They not only beat me, but also humiliated me, not allowing me to use the bathroom. One time I called out for them to let me go to the restroom, but that just got me another round of blows. One officer said to me maliciously, “Shit your pants! Piss your pants!” Then he walked out. I had no choice but to hold it. My abdomen was swollen and in pain, and later on it became numb to the point that I had no feeling in it at all. I didn’t know when I lost control of my bladder—I just felt my lower body become wet and cold as ice. It was terribly demeaning, incredibly humiliating.

They didn’t give me a single thing to eat after taking me in. I was extremely hungry at first, but later on had no desire for food—all I could feel was pain and discomfort. My eyes became so swollen that I couldn’t open them, but I did feel someone holding my mouth open and pouring cold water into it. I was thirsty at first, but after a while I couldn’t get any water down, so they were forcing water into my mouth. I was completely devoid of strength and when I forced my eyes to open a crack, I could faintly make out an officer. He punched me in the chest and barked at me, “Are you going to talk, or what?” I said, “I’ve said everything I have to say to you. What else do you want me to say?” Then he started punching and kicking me furiously. I felt like the flesh was being torn off of me. After hitting me a dozen or so times, he kicked me right in the chest—it felt like someone had grabbed hold of my heart, and it hurt so much I was left breathless.

Then he grabbed me by the collar, pushed me up against the corner, and hit me hard over and over in the head, chest, and abdomen. I have no idea how many times he hit me or for how long. It just felt like the time was passing very slowly. He became more and more crazed as I went in and out of consciousness, now numb to the pain. I started to feel something coming up from my stomach and eventually I couldn't hold it back anymore, and it started to spew out of my mouth. I faintly heard the officer shouting, "Someone get over here, he's spitting up blood!" I fainted after that, and had no idea what happened. When I came to, I saw there was blood all over my clothing. I was in a haze and didn't know when I passed out again. When I regained consciousness, I didn't have the strength to move at all—I felt like I was going to fall to pieces. I was thinking I probably wouldn't make it, which was really upsetting. Just then, something from God's words came very clearly into my mind. God says: **"I am your support and your shield, and all is in My hands"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Utterances of Christ in the Beginning, Chapter 9). That's right. Everything is in God's hands, and God decides whether I'll live or die. I remembered that when Job was tested, Satan attacked him, making his entire body break out in extremely painful boils, but God wouldn't allow Satan to take Job's life, and Satan didn't dare cross that line. I thought back over the days since my arrest. Although the police had been beating me nonstop and I didn't know how many times I had passed out, I was still alive, entirely thanks to God's care and protection. I really and truly saw that our lives and deaths are entirely within God's hands, and if He doesn't allow it, Satan cannot take our lives away. God's words gave me faith and strength, and I silently prayed, "God, I'm ready to put my life in Your hands and submit to Your sovereignty and arrangements."

Over those days I was hovering between life and death. The thing that worried me the most while I faced possible death was my wife and child. In 2012, the police went to my house to arrest me for my faith, but luckily, I wasn't at home that day. From then on, I hadn't dared go back, and it had already been three years since I'd seen them. I was thinking that if I died, I'd never be able to see them again. I hadn't been able to be at home to take care of them for years. I didn't know how they were doing and our daughter was still ill. How would they get by in the future? This thought made me want to cry, but I didn't even have the strength for that. Later, I thought of a hymn that I often sang, called **"A Lament for a Bleak and Tragic World"**: **"People have their havens, but God has nowhere to rest His head. How many offer up all they have? God has tasted enough of the world's coldness, and endured all the world's sufferings, yet it's very difficult for Him to gain man's sympathy. God worries constantly about humanity, walking among mankind. Who shows solicitude for His safety? He works tirelessly through the changing seasons, giving up everything for humanity. No one has ever shown concern for God's comfort. People only know to demand from God, but aren't willing to think a little more about God's intentions. Humanity enjoys domestic bliss, why then do they always make God's tears flow?"** (Follow the Lamb and Sing New Songs). This song was really moving for me, and I felt how indebted I was to God. For our salvation, God has become flesh and appears and works in this country of the great red dragon. He is oppressed and pursued by the Communist Party, rejected by this generation and has nowhere to rest His head. God is the Lord of creation—He is so supreme and honorable, but endures enormous humiliation for our salvation, paying such a tremendous price for our sake. His love for mankind is so great! I'd been a believer all those years and had enjoyed so much watering and sustenance from His



words, but when I faced oppression and hardship, there was no place for God in my heart. I wasn't thinking of how to stand firm in my testimony for God and shame Satan, I was just considering the flesh and my family. I even felt wronged by this suffering. I saw that I had no consideration whatsoever for God's intentions, I was really selfish and despicable. In fact, this hardship was beneficial to my life, it allowed me to see my own corruption and flaws and would help my faith in God grow. As I pondered God's love, I felt very moved and encouraged, and I swore that I would live this life for God, and live to satisfy God. No matter how much I had to suffer, even if it meant my death, I would lean on God and stand firm in my testimony for Him.

The police used both hard and soft tactics in their attempts to get something out of me. I remember one day an officer brought me one bowl half filled with rice, and another half filled with tomatoes, and said, "You haven't had anything to eat for days. All this suffering and getting beaten so much, and for what? It's not like you've killed someone or set something on fire. You've taken so many beatings—it's not worth it. You smell worse than a beggar on the streets now. Just tell us what you know and you won't have to suffer anymore. You'll get to go back home and be with your wife and child." He went on, saying, "Where did you get those books from? Where were you taking them? If you just answer one of those questions, we'll let you go right away." I still didn't say a word, so he kicked me a couple of times and shouted, "You filthy pile of meat! I see you need a good beating! Even now you can barely speak properly but you're still holding back." I was thinking that no matter what, I absolutely couldn't sell out the brothers and sisters. I couldn't be a Judas and betray God. Seeing he wasn't going to get anything out of me, he just turned around and walked out. My hands and feet had been tied up the entire time; I was curled up in the

corner, enduring their insults and beatings. After a while I began feeling incredibly miserable and weak. I was seriously injured from being beaten and frequently lost consciousness. When I was lucid, I would pray to God and often be able to think of a few passages from God's words. There were two quotes from God's words that left a particularly deep impression on me. God says: **"The path God guides us along does not go straight up, but is a winding road full of potholes; God says, furthermore, that the rockier the path is, the more it can reveal our loving hearts"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. The Path ... (6)). **"Do not fear, the Almighty God of hosts will surely be with you; He stands behind you and He is your shield"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Utterances of Christ in the Beginning, Chapter 26). When I thought about God's words, I felt that He was right there with me, guiding me. It was God's words that gave me faith and strength, allowing me to carry on. I said a silent prayer: "Oh God! It's entirely thanks to Your care and protection that I'm still alive. I give thanks to You!"

The next day, the police saw that I was reaching my limit, so they carried me into a room, rinsed me off with a water hose, then brought over a piece of paper for me to sign. My vision was really blurry, and I could only fuzzily make out one of the lines. The crimes they were charging me with were: transporting contraband, belief in a cult, and disrupting social order. When I refused to sign it, an officer grabbed my hand and forced me to leave a fingerprint. After some time, I don't know how long, they put a hood over my head, forced me into a police car, drove me somewhere, then kicked me out of the car. By the time I stood up and got the hood off, the police car was already far away. I took a few steps and then really didn't have the strength to go any farther. All I could do was sit by the side of the road. After many setbacks, I ended up back to the room I had rented.

Walking was extremely difficult for me, and when getting into a car I had to inch in bit by bit. My beard had also grown out, so the driver thought I was an old man and offered to give me a hand. When I later looked at a calendar, I realized that I'd been tortured in that police station for eight days. If it hadn't been for God's protection, there's no way I would have survived that. When I got back to the place I was staying, all I could do was lie in bed—my entire body was racked with pain. My body had blue and purple spots all over it that felt like tumors when I touched them. Putting the slightest pressure on all these lumps was incredibly painful. I just kept lying there, and it wasn't until the tenth day that I could get up and walk, and it wasn't until the fifteenth day that I had the strength to pick up a book of God's words to read. At first, I couldn't even get through a full page because sitting hurt my back, and I didn't have the strength to hold the book up when I was lying down. I could only read for three or four minutes each time.

I was kept under constant surveillance after my release and the police kept calling and harassing me. I remember once, my mother got sick and I went back to my hometown to see her. As a result, the next day the police called and asked me why I'd gone back home. Thinking about how seriously injured I was, that I couldn't have any contact with brothers and sisters or do any sort of duty was really hard for me. I didn't know how I could go on like that. Just when I was feeling truly miserable, I read something in God's words. Almighty God says: **“Those whom God refers to as ‘overcomers’ are those who are still able to stand firm in their witness and maintain their confidence and devotion to God when under the influence of Satan and while being laid siege to by Satan, that is, when they find themselves amidst the forces of darkness. If you are still able to keep a pure heart before God and maintain your genuine love**

**for God no matter what, then you are standing firm in your witness in front of God, and this is what God refers to as being an ‘overcomer.’ ... Offering a holy spiritual body and a pure virgin to God means keeping a sincere heart in front of God. For mankind, sincerity is purity, and the ability to be sincere toward God is maintaining purity. This is what you should put into practice. When you ought to pray, you pray; when you ought to gather together in fellowship, you do so; when you ought to sing hymns, you sing hymns; and when you ought to rebel against the flesh, you rebel against the flesh. When you perform your duty, you do not muddle through it; when you are faced with trials you stand firm. This is devotion to God”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. You Should Maintain Your Devotion to God). God’s words gave me faith and strength and brightened my heart. No matter how the great red dragon persecuted me, no matter if I could have contact with other church members or do a duty, and no matter what sort of outcome I had, I would follow God until the end.

I was left with a lot of health problems because of the police’s brutal torture. A doctor said there was damage to my heart valves, I had reduced blood flow to my heart, and there were problems with my liver, gallbladder, spleen, and kidneys. He said I was practically in pieces. Before I’d been in very good health, but now climbing a single flight of stairs, even empty-handed, leaves me panting and my heart aching. When they first released me, it felt like the top of my head had been pulled off. It was really painful and the slightest contact made it hurt even more. After drinking over 80 packets of Chinese medicine, my headache finally let up a little bit. I also felt that my lower abdomen was going to fall out of me. It hurt terribly, and there were two days that I kept urinating blood. At that time, I didn’t have any money to go see a doctor, and I thought I probably really wouldn’t

survive, so I said this prayer to God: “God, whether I live or die is entirely in Your hands. Whether I make it or not, I give thanks to You.” To my surprise, after taking anti-inflammatories for three days, I stopped urinating blood.

Although I suffered when I was arrested and tortured by the Communist Party, I really gained a great deal. Those eight days in hell clearly showed me that the Communist Party is a demon that opposes God. I’m just a regular, unassuming Christian, who abides by the law and minds my own business. All I want is to practice my faith, pursue the truth, gain God’s salvation, and fulfill the duty of a created being to the best of my ability. Even so, the Communist Party police arrested and nearly killed me. The Communist Party wants to use violent, brutal persecution to scare believers, so that people don’t dare have faith and follow God, and thus ruin God’s work of salvation. But the more it carries out that kind of persecution, the more we see its evil and brutality, hate and reject it, and the more we long for the light and for the coming of God’s kingdom, for the day that fairness and justice rule on earth. Through this, I also experienced God’s love. If it hadn’t been for God’s protection and the guidance of His words, there’s no way I could have made it out of that demons’ lair alive. I’m grateful to God from the bottom of my heart, and I want to pursue the truth and do my duty well to repay God’s love.

## **37. A Painful Lesson Learned From Being Slick and Deceitful**

By Mariana, Italy

In 2020 I was doing design work in the church, mainly drafting. After a while, I found that drafting was slower-paced than other work. My supervisor was overseeing other work too, so she wasn't keeping close track of ours. I started slacking off. No one was rushing me, so I just performed routine duties. I figured as long as I wasn't idle and finished some drawings every day, that was fine. Anyway, it was relaxing work. I didn't need to rush it or physically suffer at all. I was skilled at drafting; I was familiar with all the principles and professional skills. So I thought I was sure to be kept in that duty, and I'd be saved in the end. With that kind of perspective, I didn't have any daily goals or plans in my duty. I just did as much as I could and was fine with however much I got done. I didn't ever seem idle, but I was perfectly relaxed. When I was drawing I had a really hard time focusing. I immediately checked any messages that popped up in my chatting software, responding and handling things regardless of the importance or urgency. I'd fritter away quite a bit of time without realizing it. Sometimes we had morning gatherings, and if I used my time well that day I could finish three drawings, but I'd feel really complacent after finishing the first one, thinking that since the morning gathering had already taken up half the day, doing two drawings was enough. So I'd drag my feet and only end up finishing two. Not only that, but I'd use my spare time to watch the news. I wasn't thinking about my life entry or considering what problems there might be in my duty. During that time, I was just toiling in my duty, not focusing on reading God's words or self-reflecting. I showed corruption but didn't seek the truth to resolve it. I figured I didn't have any

particular difficulties in my professional skills and I'd completed a decent number of designs, so I was doing alright in my duty.

The workload kept increasing, but our pace of drawing was too slow, so work got backlogged. There was one design that was actually held up for an entire month. When the supervisor found out about it and looked into our daily work output, she realized how low our productivity was and really harshly pruned us for being lazy and negligent in our duty. She said that we didn't have any sense of urgency even when we saw how backed up the work was, and no one reported it, and that we were careless, didn't shoulder a burden, and dragged our feet in our duty, which was a hindrance to the gospel work. I was really taken aback to hear the supervisor say that. I generally felt like I stayed pretty busy and got a lot done, so why was it so little when carefully calculated? Didn't that make me a parasite leeching off of the church? I'd be dismissed and eliminated if that continued. After that, under the supervisor's oversight my efficiency in my duty improved somewhat. But seeing all the pending designs made me anxious. In particular, the supervisor was following up more closely on work, sometimes asking detailed questions and looking into where we were struggling. When she noticed us working in a perfunctory way, she used a harsher tone with us. I felt annoyed. Easy for her to pass judgment, but this was asking too much. She thought doing those designs was easy? I was already working hard. She could demand all she liked, but I wasn't superhuman! I was in a resistant state, so I didn't feel willing to suffer any more or pay a price. My superficial efforts to hurry up were just for the supervisor to see. I was afraid I'd be pruned if I was too slow. I felt like I was being dragged along and I was super tired every day. I would often fantasize about how great it would be if I could get all the drawings done in an instant, and I even envied other sisters, thinking their duties were so

relaxing, unlike mine, with endless designs to do every day. It was boring and tiring, and I'd be pruned if I worked slowly. I thought the assignment was no good. Since I wasn't in the right state, for a while I was constantly sleepy. I was getting plenty of sleep at night, but during the days I was half-asleep. I had to muster up my energy to work on designs. After that I noticed the two sisters I was working with had some issues in their work. One of them didn't understand the principles and her nitpicking over small issues was holding up our progress. The other one was always just muddling through, but I just casually pointed these things out without following up or telling our leader about it. Our team leader eventually found out about these issues and handled them, but by then our work had already been held up.

One day the leader sought me out unexpectedly and said, "You're being perfunctory, slick, and irresponsible in your duty. You only make an effort when someone pushes you. You're not genuinely expending yourself for God. Based on your behavior, you're dismissed. You can do design work part-time, but without repentance you won't be needed in future." I was left speechless by the leader's exposure of me. That really was how I'd been doing my duty, but that situation felt so sudden to me. I couldn't accept that reality right away. I acknowledged that I had delayed the work of the church and that had done actual harm. I was really miserable and full of regret and self-reproach, and I could feel that God's righteous disposition tolerates no human offense. When God looks at someone, He doesn't look at how well they appear to behave, how busy they look. He looks at their attitude toward the truth and their duty. But I'd had a really lax attitude toward my duty, making perfunctory efforts and dragging my feet, and I always had to be pushed by others. I didn't make a change after I was pruned and I'd disgusted God long before. Being dismissed was God's



chastening and discipline. I just had myself to blame—I was reaping what I'd sowed. I felt ready to submit and truly reflect on myself and repent to make up for my past transgressions. But something I didn't understand was that at first I'd wanted to do a good job, so why had I turned out to do my duty that way? What was the reason for that? I prayed to God in my confusion, asking Him to enlighten me to understand my issue.

Then I read this passage of God's words once in my devotionals: **"If you performed your duty conscientiously and responsibly, it wouldn't even take five or six years before you were able to talk of your experiences and bear testimony to God, and the various work would be carried out to great effect—but you are not willing to be considerate of God's intentions, nor do you strive toward the truth. There are some things you do not know how to do, so I give you exact instructions. You do not have to think, you just have to listen and get on with it. That is the only bit of responsibility you must take on—but even that is beyond you. Where is your loyalty? It is nowhere to be seen! All you do is say pleasant-sounding things. In your hearts, you know what you should do, but you simply do not practice the truth. This is rebellion against God, and at root, it is a lack of love for the truth. You know full well in your hearts how to act in accordance with the truth—you just don't put it into practice. This is a serious problem; you are staring at the truth without putting it into practice. You are not someone who submits to God at all. To perform a duty in God's house, the least you must do is seek and practice the truth and act according to the principles. If you cannot practice the truth in your performance of your duty, then where can you practice it? And if you do not practice any of the truth, then you are a disbeliever. What is your purpose, really, if you do not accept the truth—much less practice the truth—**

**and simply muddle along in the house of God? Do you wish to make God's house your retirement home, or an almshouse? If so, you are mistaken—God's house does not take care of freeloaders, of wastrels. Anyone of poor humanity, who does not perform their duty gladly, who is unfit to perform a duty, must all be cleared out; all disbelievers who do not accept the truth at all must be eliminated. Some people understand the truth but cannot put it into practice in performing their duties. When they see a problem, they do not solve it, and even though they know it is their responsibility, they do not give it their all. If you do not even carry out responsibilities that you are capable of, then what value or effect could performing your duty possibly have? Is it meaningful to believe in God in this way? Someone who understands the truth but cannot practice it, who cannot bear the hardships they ought to—such a person is unfit to perform a duty. Some people who perform a duty really do so just to be fed. They are beggars. They think that if they do a few tasks in God's house, their room and board will be taken care of, that they will be provided for without needing to get a job. Is there such a thing as a bargain like that? God's house does not provide for loafers. If anyone who does not practice the truth in the least, and who is consistently perfunctory in performing their duty, says they believe in God, will God acknowledge them? All such people are disbelievers and, as God sees them, evildoers”** (The Word, Vol. 3. The

Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. To Perform One's Duty Well, One Must at Least Be Possessed of a Conscience and Reason). Thinking over God's words, I felt like He was revealing me right to my face. He described exactly how I did my duty. I thought back over one thing after another that had happened. When I noticed the supervisor didn't follow up on work much, I started taking advantage of that, being sly and cunning. I didn't look idle, but didn't get

much done. In my free time, I wasn't thinking about what issues there were in my duty or about my life entry, but I'd watch the news out of curiosity—there wasn't anything proper in my heart. I was totally unaware of how I was delaying our work progress. I improved my work efficiency a little bit after being pruned by our supervisor, but I was forcing myself to make the effort just so I wouldn't be dismissed. I was resistant and complained about her oversight and supervision, and even got annoyed by doing my duty. I felt like it was a thankless, difficult job. I knew one of the sisters I was working with was just muddling through and holding up work, but I turned a blind eye. I realized I didn't have any sincerity toward my duty. I wasn't practicing the truth at all, or considering God's intentions. I just cared about my physical comforts and relaxation. I was a parasite looking for a free meal from the church. I had no conscience or reason! I wasn't behaving any differently from those disbelievers who just care about eating their fill and gaining blessings. I wasn't doing my duty that way because I didn't understand the professional skills or have the right skills. It was because I was lacking humanity and didn't pursue the truth, and because I coveted comforts of the flesh. I wasn't worthy of doing a duty in the church at all.

I read some of God's words in my self-reflection: **“All God's chosen people are now practicing performing their duties, and God makes use of people's performance of their duties to perfect one group of people and eliminate another. So, it is the performance of duty that reveals each sort of person, and each sort of deceitful person, disbeliever, and evil person is revealed and eliminated in the performance of their duty. Those who perform their duties loyally are honest people; those who are consistently perfunctory are deceitful, shrewd people, and they are disbelievers; and those who cause disruptions and disturbances in performing their duties are evil people and antichrists. ... All people**

are revealed in performing their duties—just set a person to a duty, and it will not take long before it is revealed whether they are an honest person or a deceitful person, and whether or not they are a lover of the truth. Those who love the truth can perform their duties sincerely and uphold the work of God’s house; those who do not love the truth do not uphold the work of God’s house in the least, and they are irresponsible in performing their duties. This is immediately clear to those who are clear-sighted. No one who performs their duty poorly is a lover of the truth or an honest person; such people will all be revealed and eliminated. To perform their duties well, people must have a sense of responsibility and a sense of burden. This way, the work will definitely be done properly. It is only worrying when someone does not have a sense of burden or responsibility, when they have to be prompted to do everything, when they’re always perfunctory, and they try to shift the blame when problems arise, leading to delays in their resolution. Can the work still be done well then? Can their performance of their duty yield any results? They do not wish to do any of the tasks that are arranged for them, and when they see others who need help with their work, they ignore them. They only do a bit of work when ordered, only when push comes to shove and they have no choice. This is not performing a duty—this is hired labor! A hired laborer works for an employer, doing a day’s work for a day’s pay, an hour’s work for an hour’s pay; they’re waiting to get paid. They’re afraid of doing any work their boss doesn’t see, they’re afraid of not being rewarded for anything they do, they only ever work for appearances’ sake—which means they have no loyalty” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Only an Honest Person Can Live Out True Human Likeness). **“To believe in God is to walk the right path in life, and one must pursue the truth. This is a**

**matter of the spirit and of life, and it is a different thing from nonbelievers' pursuit of wealth and glory, of making an eternal name for themselves. These are separate paths. In their jobs, nonbelievers think about how they can do less work and make more money, of the dubious tricks they could play to earn more. They think all day long about how to get rich and build up their family fortune, and they even come up with unscrupulous means to achieve their goals. This is the path of evil, the path of Satan, and it is the path that nonbelievers walk. The path walked by believers in God is that of pursuing the truth and gaining life; it is the path of following God and gaining the truth"** (The

Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Only an Honest Person Can Live Out True Human Likeness). I saw from God's words that nonbelievers work with an employee mindset. They want more money for less work, or better still to be paid without lifting a finger. When someone checks in on them they put on an act and do some work, but they're slippery and deceitful when no one's watching. No matter how the work is going, they feel no great urgency so long as they're paid on time. I realized I was exactly the same. When there wasn't any pressure or hardship in my duty, when I didn't have to suffer or pay a price, I felt like that duty really wasn't bad. I thought as long as I wasn't idle and I could complete some tasks, I wouldn't be eliminated, that I'd be qualified to stay in the church and I'd be saved in the end, killing two birds with one stone. I didn't look particularly lazy and others didn't see any problems, but I wasn't putting my all into it—I was content with just a little work. I looked over some inconsequential information the rest of the time, perusing unimportant stuff to find out some novel things. I was constantly dawdling. When our work was delayed, I acted like it was no big deal and calmly carried on as usual. When I was pruned and exposed, I put a bit more effort in to save some face and not get

dismissed, but as soon as the standards were raised, I was resistant and complained, and wanted to switch to an easier, more relaxing duty. It looked like I was doing my duty, but I was just completing a task for my supervisor to see. I had no sincerity toward my duty or toward God. I wanted to pay a small price in exchange for the blessings of the kingdom of heaven. That was trying to conduct a transaction with God. I never realized that I was such a slippery, cunning person. I'd enjoyed everything God had given me and the sustenance of His words, but I just sought ease and comfort in my duty, doing whatever kept me from suffering, without considering the church's work at all, or God's urgent will. I had no fear of God. How was that doing a duty? I was clearly delaying the church's work, and I was an opportunist freeloading off of the church. In my reflection I realized I was so selfish and despicable because I'd been upholding satanic philosophies, like "Every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost," "Making an arduous effort to win office for the sake of food and clothes," and "Life is short; enjoy it while you can." These things had become my nature. Living by these things, I just considered my own fleshly interests in my actions. I felt like in our lives, we have to be kind to ourselves, that exhausting ourselves and working too hard isn't worth it. Being free and easy is great, and worrying and getting worn out is a losing situation. I always had that attitude in my duty, being perfunctory and sluggish, which ended up delaying the church's work and ruining my own character. I was a believer, but wasn't practicing God's words, instead living according to Satan's devilish words, becoming increasingly selfish, crafty, and depraved. I had no character or dignity and wasn't worthy of trust. Even for a nonbeliever at work, if they approached things with that kind of opportunistic mentality, they might get away with it for a while but eventually they'd be found out. And what's more, I was doing a duty in the church and God had seen right

through my games and tricks. He saw that I wasn't truly expending myself for Him at all, but was just getting by. At that point it occurred to me—no wonder I was always feeling sleepy and listless at work and couldn't feel God's presence. It was because I was being slick and deceitful, which was disgusting and odious to God. He'd hidden His face from me long before. Without the Holy Spirit's work, I became very numb, so no matter how well I knew the professional skills or how experienced I was, I wouldn't do a good job.

Later I read more of God's words that clarified the nature of being perfunctory in a duty for me, and I could also see that God's disposition is unoffendable. God says: **"How you regard God's commissions is extremely important, and this is a very serious matter. If you cannot complete what God has entrusted to people, then you are not fit to live in His presence and you should be punished. It is perfectly natural and justified that humans should complete whatever commissions God entrusts to them. This is man's supreme responsibility, and is just as important as their very lives. If you do not take God's commissions seriously, then you are betraying Him in the most grievous way. In this, you are more lamentable than Judas, and should be cursed. People must gain a thorough understanding of how to treat what God entrusts to them and, at the very least, they must comprehend that the commissions He entrusts to humanity are exaltations and special favors from God, and that they are most glorious things. Everything else can be abandoned. Even if a person must sacrifice their own life, they must still fulfill God's commission"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. How to Know Man's Nature). **"Once, I entrusted someone to do something. As I explained the task to him, he carefully made a record of it in his notebook. I saw how careful he was in recording it—he seemed to feel a**

sense of burden for the work, and have a careful, responsible attitude. Having conveyed the job to him, I set to waiting for an update; two weeks went by, and still, he had not sent word back. So, I took it upon Myself to find him, and asked how the task I had given him was coming along. He said, ‘Oh, no—I forgot about it! Tell me again what it was.’ How do you feel about his answer? That was the sort of attitude he had when doing a job. I thought, ‘This person really is untrustworthy. Get away from Me, and quick! I don’t want to see you again!’ That was how I felt. So, I will tell you a fact: You must never associate the words of God with the lies of a trickster—doing so is abominable to God. There are some who say they are as good as their word, that their word is their bond. If that is so, then when it comes to God’s words, can they do as those words say when they hear them? Can they implement them as carefully as they do their personal affairs? Every sentence of God’s is important. He does not speak in jest. What He says, people must implement and execute. When God speaks, is He consulting with people? He certainly is not. Is He asking you multiple-choice questions? He certainly is not. If you can realize that God’s words and commission are orders, that man must do as they say and implement them, then you have an obligation to implement them and execute them. If you think that God’s words are just a joke, just casual remarks that can be done—or not done—however one likes, and you treat them as such, then you are quite without reason and unfit to be called a person. God will never speak to you again. If a person is always making their own choices when it comes to God’s requirements, to His commands and His commission, and treating them with a perfunctory attitude, then they are a sort of person that God loathes. In things I command and entrust to you directly, if you are always needing Me to supervise you



**and urge you on, to follow up with you, always making Me worry and make inquiries, requiring that I check everything for you at every turn, then you ought to be eliminated”** (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Excursus Three: How Noah and Abraham Obeyed God’s Words and Submitted to Him (Part Two)). I learned from God’s words that anything He says, anything He demands must be carried out, must be adhered to by a created being. If we don’t take God’s words seriously, but always need others’ oversight and reminders in our work, or we just reluctantly do a little when someone forces us, that is essentially deceiving and cheating God, which is disgusting and hateful to Him. That kind of person doesn’t deserve to hear God’s words or stay in the church, but should be eliminated. I felt really afraid when I thought over God’s words, especially the part where He says: **“This person really is untrustworthy. Get away from Me, and quick! I don’t want to see you again!”** I was regretful and guilty about previous transgressions in doing my duty, and tears just kept running down my face. Looking back on my attitude toward my duty, it was just like what God exposed; it was incredibly casual. This is a crucial period for the expansion of the kingdom gospel and the other brothers and sisters are all dying to do a duty. But I was coveting my fleshly comforts, leisurely and perfunctory in my duty, content just to labor without trying to be efficient, which impacted my work results. I was a slacker, derelict in my duty, loafing around, just thinking of my own contentment. The church entrusted me with a vital job and I should have given it my all, I should have fulfilled my responsibility. Instead, I treated it as capital, as a bargaining chip I could use to live off of the church without suffering or paying a price at all, or thinking of how to improve my work. I was just doing the bare minimum. I didn’t care how slow my progress was or how anxious God was. I just cared about not wearing myself out. I was negligent and unmindful in my duty, just wanting to get

by, dragging my feet wherever possible. God didn't have any place in my heart, and I didn't have a God-fearing heart at all. Didn't being so casual toward my duty make me even lowlier than a dog? Dogs are loyal to their owners. Whether their owner is by their side or not, they fulfill their responsibilities and watch over their owner's home. Based on the way I acted, I wasn't worthy of continuing to do a duty. I swore to myself that from that day forward, I would repent and make up for what I owed.

Then in my devotionals, I read a passage of God's words that gave me a path for how to do my duty in the future. God's words say: **"What did Noah think in his heart, once God had commanded him to build an ark? He thought, 'From today onward, nothing matters as much as building the ark, nothing is as important and urgent as this. I have heard the words from the Creator's heart, I have felt His pressing intention, so I must not delay; I must build the ark that was spoken of and asked for by God with all haste.'** What was Noah's attitude? One of not daring to be neglectful. And in what manner did he execute building the ark? Without delay. He carried out and executed each detail of what was spoken of and instructed by God with all haste, and with all his energy, without being at all perfunctory. In sum, Noah's attitude toward the Creator's command was submission. He was not unconcerned with it, and there was no resistance in his heart, nor was there indifference. Instead, he diligently tried to understand the intention of the Creator as he memorized every detail. When he comprehended God's pressing intention, he decided to pick up the pace, to complete what God had imparted to him with all haste. What did this mean, 'with all haste'? It meant completing, in as little time possible, work that would previously have taken a month, getting it done perhaps three or five days ahead of schedule, without dragging

his feet at all or the least procrastination, but pushing ahead with the whole project as best he could. Naturally, while carrying out each job, he would try his hardest to minimize losses and errors, and not to do any work such that it would have to be repeated; he would also have completed every task and procedure on schedule and done them well, guaranteeing its quality. This was a true manifestation of not dragging one's feet. So, what was the prerequisite for his being able not to drag his feet? (He had heard God's command.) Yes, that was the prerequisite and context for this. Now, why was Noah able not to drag his feet? Some people say Noah was possessed of true submission. So, what did he possess that allowed him to achieve such true submission? (He was considerate of God's heart.) That's right! This is what it means to have heart! People with heart are able to be considerate of God's heart; those without heart are empty shells, fools, they do not know to be considerate of God's heart. Their mentality is: 'I don't care how urgent this is for God, I'll do it however I please—in any case, I'm not being idle or lazy.' This kind of attitude, this kind of negativity, the total lack of proactiveness—this is not someone who is considerate of God's heart, nor do they understand how to be considerate of God's heart. In which case, are they possessed of true faith? Definitely not. Noah was considerate of God's heart, he had true faith, and was thus able to complete God's commission. And so, it is not enough to simply accept God's commission and be willing to make some effort. You must also be considerate of God's intentions, give your all, and be loyal—which requires you to have a conscience and reason; it is what people ought to have, and what was found in Noah” (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Excursus Three: How Noah and Abraham Obeyed God's Words and Submitted to Him (Part Two)). I saw from God's words that Noah gained God's approval because he had

true faith in God and was considerate of His will. When he received God's commission, he made building the ark his priority. He didn't think about his physical suffering or how hard it would be. In that pre-industrial age, building such a huge ark must have required lots of physical and mental effort, and he had to withstand others' mockery. Under these circumstances, Noah stayed strong for 120 years to complete God's commission, ultimately comforting God's heart. Noah genuinely expended himself for God and deserved God's trust. But as for me, with no one pushing me and watching me, I exploited the chance to be lazy and sly, to covet my fleshly comforts, dragging my feet in my work, never concerned about how much I held things up. I really had no humanity and didn't deserve God's salvation. Now I knew that doing a duty should be like Noah building the ark, that there needs to be real action. I have to make every second count to forge ahead, to work more efficiently. Even if no one's pushing me or checking up on me, I need to be responsible and do everything I can. That's the only way to be a person with a conscience and humanity.

After that I started scheduling my time. When I wasn't doing design work, I used my free time to help out with another duty and I kept a close eye on my own state. My schedule was really full every day, but I felt really at peace, and I was more invested in my duty than before. Sometimes when a job was just about done and I had the urge to slack off again, or drafting was held up because I hadn't arranged my schedule well, I wanted to indulge myself, thinking that I wasn't a member of the team and no one was pushing me forward, plus I was helping out with another job, so being a little slower on design work was justifiable. Thinking that, I realized I wasn't in the right state and rushed to seek the truth to resolve it. I read this in God's words: **"When people perform their duty, they are, in fact, doing what they ought to do. If you do it before God, if you perform**

**your duty and submit to God with an attitude of honesty and with heart, will this attitude not be far more correct? So how should you apply this attitude to your everyday life? You must make ‘worshiping God with heart and honesty’ your reality. Whenever you want to be slack and just go through the motions, whenever you want to act in a slippery way and be lazy, and whenever you get distracted or would rather be enjoying yourself, you should consider: ‘In behaving like this, am I being untrustworthy? Is this putting my heart into doing my duty? Am I being disloyal by doing this? In doing this, am I failing to live up to the commission God has entrusted to me?’ This is how you should self-reflect. If you come to find out that you are always perfunctory in your duty, that you are disloyal, and that you have hurt God, what should you do? You should say, ‘In the moment I sensed that there was something wrong here, but I didn’t treat it as a problem; I just glossed over it carelessly. I didn’t realize until now that I really had been perfunctory, that I had not lived up to my responsibility. I truly am lacking in conscience and reason!’ You have found the problem and come to know a bit about yourself—so now, you must turn yourself around! Your attitude toward performing your duty was wrong. You were careless with it, as with an extra job, and you did not put your heart into it. If you are perfunctory like this again, you must pray to God and let Him discipline and chasten you. You must have such a will in performing your duty. Only then can you truly repent. You may turn yourself around only when your conscience is clear and your attitude toward performing your duty is transformed”** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Only in the Frequent Reading of God’s Words and Contemplation of the Truth Is There a Way Ahead). Reading God’s words gave me more clarity on a path of practice. A duty is a commission given to us by God. Whether

anyone is supervising us or not, we should accept God's scrutiny and put our all into it. Always needing someone to push me to do a little was lacking devotion, and even others found that disgraceful. I couldn't keep being that way, but I had to have a God-fearing heart and accept His scrutiny. I should be proactive in my duty without needing others to urge me on. When things were hectic in both jobs and I needed to pay a price, I arranged my schedule ahead of time and did my absolute best, trying not to be perfunctory about my work. When I approached things that way, after a little while I started to see some results in my duty. I had to put more into it than before and I expended some energy, but I didn't feel tired at all—I felt calm and at peace. When I encountered difficulties in my duty, through seeking the truth, I made more gains. I made progress in my professional skills as well as my life entry.

One day in June of 2021, the leader came to talk to me and told me I was being reassigned to the team. I was so excited I didn't even know what to say, and I gave my heartfelt thanks to God. The experience had shown me how lazy, selfish and vile I was. I truly hated myself, and now knew to treasure the opportunity of doing a duty. I also had a bit of a God-fearing heart. Sometimes I still felt lazy, and then I prayed to God and asked Him to scrutinize my heart. When I got perfunctory, sly, and cunning, I would ask God to expose, chasten, and discipline me right away. Since putting that into practice I'd become a lot less devious and work-shy than before, and had achieved better results in my duty, which made me feel really fulfilled. The leader told me later that I was doing my duty a lot better than before. I was really moved to hear that, as well as motivated. I knew I still wasn't doing enough and I needed to keep working hard. I'm grateful for God chastening and disciplining me, which has helped me change my attitude toward my duty.

## 38. Lessons Learned Through Failures

By Jiang Ping, China

Before, when I believed in the Lord Jesus, I often read the Bible and spread the Lord's gospel. After believing in Almighty God and reading His words, I learned that Almighty God expresses the truth in the last days to do the work of judging people—to cleanse them and to save them. So, I became even more active in my duty to spread the gospel. Through practice, I became clearer about the truth of testifying to God's work, grasped the principles of preaching the gospel and gained some experience, so my preaching was quite effective. My brothers and sisters all said that I was really good at it, and that I could grasp the gospel candidates' notions and fellowship to resolve them. The problems they found difficult weren't much of a challenge for me. Later, while I was preaching the gospel, I was arrested by the police and sentenced to one year in prison. Once I was out, I quickly started preaching the gospel again. Many of my brothers and sisters had only just learned how to preach the gospel, and they weren't getting great results, so the leader put me in charge of the gospel work. With my brothers and sisters, I analyzed some notions that were commonly held by gospel candidates, and explained how to resolve them through fellowship. Sometimes we'd encounter gospel candidates with a lot of religious notions, and the brothers and sisters would fellowship with them multiple times to no effect. But when I fellowshipped with them, I would quickly resolve their notions. As time passed, our church's gospel work obtained better and better results. And, slowly, I began to admire myself. I thought I really had a high caliber, and that I could easily resolve problems the other brothers and sisters couldn't. I thought that I was a rare talent. I began to think more

and more highly of myself, and scorned the others for their inattentiveness and poor caliber.

One time, a sister who watered newcomers came to me. She said that a newcomer raised some questions, and wanted me to fellowship together with her. I was so annoyed with her. I thought, “Why can’t you resolve such a simple problem? Are you that inattentive in your duty, that unburdened? Is your caliber so bad that you can’t even resolve a newcomer’s notions?” So I berated her, saying, “If you can’t even water a newcomer well, what use are you?” My sister just bowed her head, and said nothing. Tears fell from her eyes. I knew it wasn’t right to say that. But I thought, “If I’m not tough with her, then she won’t take it to heart, and she won’t improve.” After that, she didn’t dare come to me when she had a problem. She was negative, and constrained. She felt that her caliber was too poor to do her duty and water newcomers. I knew how she felt, but I didn’t reflect on myself. I didn’t fellowship or try to help her. In my mind, I belittled her: Wasn’t it delaying things to have her do this work when she couldn’t solve such simple problems? So, after that, I stopped her from watering that newcomer. Another time, a church leader and I held a gathering for newcomers. But after the leader’s fellowship, the newcomers’ problems weren’t resolved. I thought, “You’re the leader, but you can’t even water the newcomers.” So, I took the initiative and asked them, “Did you all understand what the sister said just now?” They shook their heads and said that they were still unclear. After that, I spoke with them at length about the three stages of God’s work. They listened happily, and many of them said, “Now that you’ve put it like this, we understand.” Seeing that they had this attitude toward me made me feel so happy. I felt that I was better than the leader at preaching the gospel and watering.



Afterward, I constantly showed myself off and belittled others. My disposition became more and more arrogant. I imposed my will on all work-related matters, big or small. I just thought I was better than my brothers and sisters, and that even if I discussed things with them, it would be all up to me anyway, so I might as well just make my decisions and avoid wasting time. And with the preaching and watering work, I felt like everyone else was below me, and that it was better if I did it all myself. So, I began preaching and watering at the same time. I took on all sorts of jobs by myself. I was so busy that my feet hardly touched the ground. But then the leader found out that I wasn't training anyone, that I wasn't letting the others practice, and she pruned me. She said, "You're taking care of everything by yourself. Don't you think this is arrogant?" Even faced with being pruned and reproached, I didn't think it was a big deal. I felt that every day, from dawn till dusk, I was busy preaching and watering the newcomers, which showed I was bearing a burden for my duty in my opinion. I also thought that my caliber and working abilities were good, and that, as long as I got results, my arrogance wasn't a problem. Afterward, I kept doing things my own way. Whatever matter arose, I'd deal with it myself, without talking to the others. Some of my brothers and sisters felt constrained. They thought they weren't good enough, and lived in negativity. Others became especially dependent on me. They took on no burden in their duties, always waiting for my instructions, and this affected the gospel work and the watering work. Not long after all this, my eyes started chronically tearing up. Sometimes it got so bad I couldn't see. The doctor said that my tear ducts were blocked, and that I needed surgery. While I was walking home, I started thinking, "Suddenly getting this eye disease, there must be God's intention behind it. Have I offended God somehow?" That's when I started to reflect on the state in which I'd been

doing my duty. I prayed to God in my heart, asking Him to enlighten me, so I could understand my problem.

When I got home, I read these words of God: **“Some people who have done a little work and led a church quite well think that they are superior to others, and often spread words such as: ‘Why does God put me in an important position? Why does He keep mentioning my name? Why does He keep talking to me? God thinks highly of me because I have caliber and because I am above ordinary people. You are even jealous that God treats me better. What have you got to be jealous of? Can you not see how much work I do and how much of a sacrifice I make? You shouldn’t be jealous of whatever good things God gives me, because I deserve them. I have worked for many years and suffered so much. I deserve credit and am qualified.’ There are others who say: ‘God allowed me to join co-worker meetings and listen to His fellowship. I have this qualification—do you have that? Firstly, I have a high caliber, and I pursue the truth more than you do. What’s more, I expend myself more than you, and I can get the church’s work done—can you?’ This is arrogance. The results of people’s performance of their duties and their work are different. Some have good results, whereas others have poor results. Some people are born with good caliber and are also able to seek the truth, so the results of their duties improve quickly. This is because of their good caliber, which is predestined by God. But how to solve the problem of poor results from performing one’s duty? You must constantly seek the truth and work hard, then you too can gradually achieve good results. As long as you strive for the truth and achieve to the limit of your abilities, God will approve. But regardless of whether your work results are good or not, you should not have erroneous ideas. Do not think, ‘I am qualified to be**

**God's equal,' 'I am qualified to enjoy what God has given me,' 'I am qualified to make God praise me,' 'I am qualified to lead others,' or 'I am qualified to lecture others.' Do not say you are qualified. People should not have these thoughts. If you do have these thoughts, it proves that you are not in your rightful place, and you don't even have the basic sense that a human being should possess. So how can you cast off your arrogant disposition? You cannot"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. An Arrogant Nature Is at the Root of Man's Resistance to God). God's words exposed my state. I realized that my behavior had been dominated by my arrogant nature. When I'd gotten results doing the preaching and watering work, I'd felt uplifted. I'd thought that my abilities and caliber were so good, that I was indispensable to the gospel work. I took these skills as capital. I was so arrogant that I disregarded everyone else. I acted like I was above the others, berating them and constraining them. When my sister had difficulties watering the newcomers, I didn't help her to resolve the problem—I just used my status to rebuke her. And when the leader and I watered the newcomers together, and the leader didn't resolve their problems, I didn't cooperate with the fellowship. Instead, I looked down on the leader, and deliberately showed her up in front of the newcomers. When problems arose at work, I didn't seek the truth principles or discuss things with my brothers and sisters. I thought that I had the experience to see through things clearly, that I could decide and take care of everything myself. I didn't give anyone else the chance to practice, and even when I was pruned, I didn't treat it as a problem. I thought that I was taking on a burden in my duty. I assumed seniority and didn't accept being pruned. I was really so arrogant. In my heart, I didn't fear or submit to God. I was in charge of the gospel work. I should've been training my brothers and sisters to preach the gospel as well. But instead, I scorned and belittled them, and took care of

everything myself. As a result, they felt constrained by me, and some were really dependent on me, unable to carry a burden in their duty, and the gospel work was impacted. This wasn't doing my duty—this was doing evil, and hindering the gospel work. Before, I'd thought that I was taking on a burden in my duty by doing everything myself. But in fact, I was just being arrogant. I'd been putting myself above the others, treating them as unimportant and taking charge of everything, acting willfully and recklessly with my arrogant disposition, without thought for God or other people. Wasn't this the disposition of the archangel? If I didn't repent, I'd be spurned and eliminated by God. Thinking of this, I realized that God was chastening and disciplining me with this illness. If God had not devised this situation for me, I would have continued acting within my arrogant disposition. I would have kept doing evil things, offending God's disposition, and being met with punishment. When I realized this, I cried and prayed to God, "Oh God! I'm so arrogant that I have no humanity or reason. I'm not worthy of living before You. God! I don't want to resist or rebel against You. I want to repent!" After that, I shared my state openly with my brothers and sisters. I exposed and dissected how I had hurt them due to my arrogant disposition, and apologized. After that, I became more humble in performing my duty. I discussed everything with my brothers and sisters, and before long my illness cleared up. I thanked God from the bottom of my heart.

After a while, due to the needs of the gospel work, the church assigned me to spread the gospel in a different location. I couldn't help but start admiring myself again: It seemed I did well in preaching the gospel. Otherwise, why would they send me elsewhere to spread the gospel? One day, I went to preach the gospel to two religious believers. I didn't think it would be difficult, so I didn't try to understand their situation or their main

notions in advance. Instead, as I'd done previously, I directly bore witness to the three stages of God's work. As soon as they heard this they knew that I was a believer in Almighty God, and so they put their guard up. They weren't willing to hear anything more. At the time, I was stunned. I'd come all this way to get here, and I'd thought that I could quickly expand the gospel work. I never thought that I would fail so soon. How would I expand the gospel work now? Still, I wasn't willing to give up just yet. Maybe it was just a one-time problem, and I'd just messed things up this time. I'd been spreading the gospel for so many years, so I was certain that I could gain people. But everywhere I went, I failed. I felt so frustrated, and was in a state of despondency. After that, I was dismissed. It pained me to think that my preaching was so ineffective. I felt like I was useless. If this continued, wouldn't I be eliminated? I missed the days when I was passionately preaching the gospel. Though the work was hard, and tiring, it had made me happy to get such good results. But why couldn't I get those results now? At the thought of this, I felt an unbearable pain in my heart. In my pain, I prayed to God again and again, "Oh God! What lessons do I need to learn from this situation? Please, enlighten me, and guide me to understand myself."

While seeking, I saw this passage of God's words: **"When someone is gifted or has a talent, it means that they are inherently better at something or excel in some way compared with others. For example, you may react a little faster than others, understand things a little quicker than others, have mastered certain professional skills, or you may be an eloquent speaker, and so on. These are gifts and talents that a person may have. If you have certain talents and strengths, how you understand and handle them is very important. If you think that you are irreplaceable because no one else has your talents and gifts, and**

that you are practicing the truth if you use your gifts and talents to perform your duty, is this view right or wrong? (Wrong.) Why do you say it is wrong? What exactly are talents and gifts? How should you understand them, use them and deal with them? The fact is that no matter what gift or talent you have, it doesn't mean that you have the truth and life. If people have certain gifts and talents, it is appropriate for them to perform a duty that utilizes these gifts and talents, but it does not mean that they are practicing the truth, nor does it mean that they are doing things according to the principles. For example, if you are born with a gift for singing, does your ability to sing represent the practice of the truth? Does it mean that you sing according to the principles? It does not. Let's say, for example, that you have a natural talent for words and are good at writing. If you don't understand the truth, can your writing accord with the truth? Does it necessarily mean that you have experiential testimony? (No, it does not.) Hence, gifts and talents are different to the truth and they cannot be compared. No matter what gift you have, if you do not pursue the truth, you won't perform your duty well. Some people flaunt their gifts often and generally feel that they are better than others, so they look down on other people and are unwilling to cooperate with others when performing their duties. They always want to be in charge, and as a result they often violate the principles when performing their duties, and their working efficiency is also very low. The gifts have made them arrogant and self-righteous, made them look down on others, and made them always feel that they are better than other people and that no one is as good as them, and because of this they become smug. Have these people not been ruined by their gifts? They have indeed. People who are gifted and have talents are most likely to be arrogant and self-

righteous. If they don't pursue the truth and always live by their gifts, that is a very dangerous thing. No matter what duty a person performs in God's house, no matter what kind of talent they possess, if they don't pursue the truth then they will certainly fail to fulfill their duty. Whatever gifts and talents a person has, they should perform that kind of duty well. If they can also understand the truth and do things according to the principles, then their gifts and talents will have a role to play in the performance of that duty. Those who don't accept the truth, and don't seek the truth principles, and only rely on their gifts to do things won't achieve any results from performing their duties, and risk being eliminated. ... People who are gifted and have talents think they are very clever, that they understand everything—but they do not know that gifts and talents do not represent the truth, that these things have no connection to the truth. When people rely on their gifts and imaginings in their actions, their thoughts and opinions often run contrary to the truth—but they can't see this, they still think, 'See how clever I am; I've made such smart choices! Such wise decisions! None of you can match me.' They forever live in a state of narcissism and self-appreciation. It is hard for them to quiet their hearts and contemplate what God asks of them, what the truth is, and what the truth principles are. So it is hard for them to understand the truth, and even though they perform duties, they are not able to practice the truth, and so, too, is it very difficult for them to enter into the truth reality. In short, if a person cannot pursue the truth and accept the truth, then irrespective of what gifts or talents they have, they will not be able to perform their duty well—of this there cannot be the slightest doubt'' (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. What Is It, Exactly, on Which People Rely to Live?). After pondering God's words, I understood that

having special talents and gifts doesn't mean that you have the truth. If you don't understand the truth, or perform your duty without seeking principles, and you always use your talents and gifts as capital, you will grow more arrogant over time. I realized that, since I'd started my duty, I'd been living by my gifts. I knew the Bible well, and had experience preaching the gospel, so I'd treated these things as capital, becoming more and more arrogant. I looked down on everyone else. I treated them all as though they didn't matter. The leader pruned me for my arrogance, but I didn't accept it. I still used my gifts as capital, and refused her suggestions. When preaching elsewhere, I didn't seek the truth principles. I relied on my gifts and experience, trying to achieve great things. And, as a result, I failed time and time again. But even then, I didn't think my attitude was a problem. I didn't reflect. I shamelessly thought that since I had gifts and experience, then I could do my duty just fine. I was so arrogant and irrational. I thought of Paul, who was gifted, intelligent and eloquent. He had profound knowledge of the Scriptures, and was excellent at preaching the gospel and converting people. But he used it all as capital. His disposition became more and more arrogant, and he disregarded other people. He claimed he was not behind the apostles, and worked only for the sake of rewards and the crown. He even claimed that for him to live is Christ. And, in the end, he was punished by God. His story shows that having gifts does not mean you possess the truth reality. If you don't pursue the truth, your corrupt disposition won't change, and you'll be revealed and eliminated. Later, I saw another passage of God's words, which gave me some clarity. Almighty God says: **"Are you able to sense the guidance of God and the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit in the course of performing your duty? (Yes.) If you are able to sense the work of the Holy Spirit, yet still think highly of yourselves, and think you are possessed of reality, then what is going on here?"**



(When our performance of our duty has borne some fruit, we think that half the credit belongs to God, and half belongs to us. We magnify our cooperation to an unlimited extent, thinking that nothing was more important than our cooperation, and that God's enlightenment would not have been possible without it.) **So why did God enlighten you? Can God enlighten other people as well? (Yes.) When God enlightens someone, it is by the grace of God. And what is that little bit of cooperation on your part? Is it something you are due credit for, or is it your duty and responsibility? (It is our duty and responsibility.) When you recognize that it is your duty and responsibility, then you have the right mindset, and will not think of trying to take credit for it. If you always think, 'This is my contribution. Would God's enlightenment have been possible without my cooperation? This task requires man's cooperation; our cooperation accounts for the bulk of the accomplishment,' then you are wrong. How could you cooperate if the Holy Spirit had not enlightened you, and if no one had fellowshiped the truth principles to you? You would not know what God requires, nor would you know the path of practice. Even if you wanted to submit to God and cooperate, you wouldn't know how. Is this 'cooperation' of yours not just empty words? Without true cooperation, you are only acting according to your own ideas—in which case, could the duty you perform be up to standard? Absolutely not, which indicates the issue at hand. What is the issue? No matter what duty a person performs, whether they achieve results, perform their duty up to standard, and gain God's approval depends on God's actions. Even if you fulfill your responsibilities and duty, if God does not work, if God does not enlighten and guide you, then you won't know your path, your direction, or your goals. What ultimately comes of that? After toiling**

**for all that time, you will not have performed your duty properly, nor will you have gained the truth and life—it will all have been in vain. Therefore, your duty being performed up to standard, edifying your brothers and sisters, and obtaining God’s approval all depends on God! People can only do those things that they are personally capable of, that they ought to do, and that are within their inherent capabilities—nothing more. Ultimately then, performing your duties in an effective manner depends on the guidance of God’s words and the enlightenment and leadership of the Holy Spirit; only then can you understand the truth, and complete God’s commission according to the path that God has given you and the principles He has set. This is God’s grace and blessing, and if people cannot see this, they are blind”**

(The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. The Principles That Should Guide One’s Conduct). Reading God’s words, I understood that the results I achieved when preaching the gospel and watering the newcomers, weren’t my credit and capital. It was God’s grace and the Holy Spirit’s guidance. If God’s words did not fellowship all aspects of the truth principles to grant us direction and a path of practice, what would I understand then? Without the Holy Spirit’s enlightenment, and the guidance of God’s words, then no matter how eloquent, high-caliber or familiar with the Bible I was, I’d never resolve those religious people’s notions. In the revelation of the facts, I saw that without the Holy Spirit’s enlightenment, I was just a fool who couldn’t resolve anything, who couldn’t even convert any one person. I’d always thought that getting results in my duty meant that my caliber was good, that I was capable. But in fact, I didn’t understand God’s work or know my own measure. I was always using these things as capital to show off. I was so shameless about it.

Later on, I read more of God's words: **"God loves mankind, cares for mankind, and shows concern for mankind, as well as constantly and unceasingly providing for mankind. He never feels in His heart that this is additional work or something that deserves a lot of credit. Nor does He feel that saving humanity, supplying them, and granting them everything, is making a huge contribution to mankind. He simply provides for mankind quietly and silently, in His own way and through His own essence and what He has and is. No matter how much provision and how much help mankind receives from Him, God never thinks about or tries to take credit. This is determined by the essence of God, and is also precisely a true expression of God's disposition"** (The Word, Vol. 2. On Knowing God. God's Work, God's Disposition, and God Himself I). Reading God's words, I was moved. God's disposition is so good and beautiful! To save us, who have been deeply corrupted by Satan, God has twice become flesh. He's done so much work, and said so much, and endured great humiliation and pain. But God has never expressed it to mankind. He's never felt this to be a matter that deserves a lot of credit. God's essence reveals no trace of arrogance and showing off. Instead, He works quietly to complete His work. God's humility and hiddenness is admirable. I'm not even as good as an ant. I got a few good results in my duty and I felt I was amazing. I thought I had achieved so much that I looked down my nose at everyone else. When I thought of how I'd acted when I'd lectured and belittled other people—my tone, and my manner—I felt disgust. If God hadn't arranged all this to reveal and prune me, my arrogant nature would have disturbed and disrupted the church's work. But God stopped me from stepping down that evil path, and allowed me to repent and change. God was saving me. I was so grateful to Him! So, I prayed to God, "God! I don't

want to live by my arrogant disposition. May You guide and save me, and help me to live as a human.”

A while later, my state had improved a little. My leader arranged for me to water the newcomers again. At one point, one of my sisters had trouble watering a newcomer, and didn't know what to do. So she came to me, seeking fellowship. It turned out that she hadn't properly grasped the root of that newcomer's problems, and I began to feel scornful of her. I thought, “Your caliber is too low. You can't even see the newcomer's problems. If everyone waters newcomers like you do, won't the church's work be held up?” But, this time, I was aware that I was revealing my arrogant disposition. So I prayed to God, rebelling against myself. Later, I read these words of God: **“As someone well-versed in professional knowledge, you must not put on airs or flaunt your qualifications; you should proactively teach your skills and knowledge to novices, so that everyone can perform their duties well together. It may be that you are the most knowledgeable about your profession and lead in terms of skill, but this is a gift that God has given you, and you should use it to perform your duty and make use of your strengths. No matter how skilled or talented you are, you cannot undertake the work alone; a duty is performed more effectively if everyone is able to grasp the skills and knowledge of a profession. As the saying goes, an able man needs the support of three other people. No matter how capable an individual is, without the help of everyone else, it's not enough. Therefore, none should be arrogant and none should wish to act or make decisions on their own. People should rebel against the flesh, put aside their own ideas and opinions, and work in harmony with everyone else. Whoever has professional knowledge should lovingly help others, so that they may also master these skills and knowledge. This is of benefit to the**

**performance of duty. ... If you are considerate of God's intentions and are willing to be loyal to the work of His house, you should offer up all your strengths and skills, so that others may learn and grasp them, and perform their duties better. This is what accords with God's intentions; only such people have humanity, and they are loved and blessed by God"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. The Proper Fulfillment of Duty Requires Harmonious Cooperation). God's words showed me a path of practice. My sister was just training to water newcomers. It was natural that she wouldn't be able to understand or resolve certain issues. I should do my best to help her and teach her how to resolve those issues. So, I fellowshiped with her, and together we found relevant passages of God's words. Later, the newcomer's issues were resolved, and he became willing to preach the gospel. My sister and I were so happy. Afterward, when I worked with my brothers and sisters, I was more humble. Sometimes, when preaching the gospel and watering newcomers, they're unable to resolve the problems of gospel candidates and newcomers. But I don't belittle them anymore. Instead, we fellowship and seek principles together. When they offer alternative suggestions, I consciously deny myself, and listen to them. I don't dictate to them or look down on them anymore. Doing this has given me peace and liberation in my heart.

## 39. The Transaction Behind Paying a Price

By Liu Ying, China

One day at the end of 2019, my granddaughter suddenly said that her leg hurt. I took her to the hospital to have some medical imaging done, but nothing was found, so I didn't take it seriously. The next day, she said her leg was still throbbing in pain. Seeing her crying in pain made me cry as well. By that night, her leg was hurting more frequently, and she barely slept at all. As I massaged her leg, I kept praying to God and entrusted her illness to Him. On the morning of the third day, my son and daughter-in-law took my granddaughter to the county hospital.

After being hospitalized, she continuously had a high fever. It remained at 40 degrees and didn't subside. She was examined in the surgical department and internal medicine department, but nothing was found, and the doctors had no cure. Helpless, my son took her to a hospital in the provincial capital. Consultation with experts produced a diagnosis of lupus one moment and a diagnosis of sepsis the next. When my daughter-in-law's parents returned from the hospital and told me about the situation, I was very worried. Lupus and sepsis were both fatal diseases. Even putting the diagnosis aside, my granddaughter still had a high fever of 40 degrees, which could cause a great deal of damage to her health if it went on too long. Her situation wasn't looking good. The more I thought about it, the more upset I felt. I had raised my granddaughter, and I couldn't bear to see anything happen to her. I tried to comfort myself over and over, thinking: "She'll be fine. God is omnipotent. He will protect my granddaughter. He won't let her die." When I thought of my granddaughter's illness, I often cried in distress. She was still so young, and she had to suffer like this. I wished I was the one struck with this illness so that I could suffer in her

place. I also thought, “I believe in God, so why is this happening to my family?” But then I’d think again, “Actually, this situation must have come to me with God’s permission. Perhaps God is testing my faith. I cannot blame God. As long as I persist in doing my duty, my granddaughter’s illness will be cured.” After that, I ate and drank God’s words like usual and continued to perform my duty. When I hosted my brothers and sisters, I did everything I could for them. My brothers and sisters wanted to help me, but I didn’t let them. I thought that as long as I performed my duty as much as I could, God would show me grace, and my granddaughter would get better.

About half a month later, my son called to say that my granddaughter’s illness was confirmed to be sepsis, her high fever continued to come and go, and growths had formed on the pericardium, which was life-threatening. When I heard this news I could feel my heart clench. I couldn’t accept it, so I made a demand of God, “My granddaughter is sick, but I have continued to perform my duty, so she should be getting better! But now, not only has her disease not improved, it’s actually gotten worse. Is it really impossible to cure her disease?” One day, my husband came to me crying and said, “Our granddaughter is dying. The hospital says she is terminally ill, and the doctor says there’s nothing they can do. They’ve told us to bring her home.” My husband’s words were like a bolt from the blue. I couldn’t believe it was true; I couldn’t accept it. My mind was filled with images of my life with my granddaughter. As I thought of how cute she was, my tears couldn’t stop flowing. Over and over, I cried out to God to watch over my heart and lead me to submit. But when I saw the photo of her on my phone, her whole face was swollen, and I lost all will to go on. I didn’t want to read God’s word and I felt no motivation to perform my duty. The only thing I cared about was my granddaughter’s illness. Later, my son-in-law took my granddaughter’s medical records to a large hospital in Shanghai for

consultation, but the experts also said there was nothing they could do and suggested we stop spending money on a lost cause. This made me especially upset, “I have believed in God for so many years, I never stopped performing my duties, and I always tried my best to do any work the church arranged for me. Even when my granddaughter got sick, I didn’t give up on my duty. I continued to host my brothers and sisters. After paying such a price, why did my granddaughter get this terrible disease?” The more I thought about it, the more aggrieved I felt. I couldn’t help crying. In my pain, I prayed to God, “God, my granddaughter is dying. I am miserable and weak. I don’t know what to do, and I still have complaints against You. Please guide me in understanding Your intention.”

In my suffering, I thought of God’s word:

**4. If, after you have made expenditures for Me, I do not satisfy your petty demands, will you become disheartened and disappointed with Me, or even become furious and shout abuse?**

**5. If you have always been very loyal, with much love for Me, yet you suffer the torment of illness, poverty, and the abandonment of your friends and relatives, or if you endure any other misfortunes in life, will your loyalty and love for Me still continue?**

—The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. A Very Serious Problem: Betrayal (2)

Faced with God’s questions, I felt extremely ashamed. My granddaughter’s illness was a real test for me to see whether I was faithful and submissive to God. In the past, I always thought I had been making an effort and performing my duty for God, and that this meant I was loyal to God. However, when my granddaughter got sepsis, and her condition worsened, I became negative and complained. I stopped wanting to read God’s word, and became unmotivated in my duty. I saw that I wasn’t



actually submissive or loyal to God. I prayed to God, asking Him to guide me in learning lessons and being genuinely submissive in the matter of my granddaughter's illness. I thought of God's word: **"What you pursue is to be able to gain peace after believing in God, for your children to be free from illness, for your husband to have a good job, for your son to find a good wife, for your daughter to find a decent husband, for your oxen and horses to plow the land well, for a year of good weather for your crops. This is what you seek. Your pursuit is only to live in comfort, for no accidents to befall your family, for the winds to pass you by, for your face to be untouched by grit, for your family's crops to not be flooded, for you to be unaffected by any disaster, to live in God's embrace, to live in a cozy nest. A coward such as you, who always pursues the flesh—do you have a heart, do you have a spirit? Are you not a beast? I give you the true way without asking for anything in return, yet you do not pursue. Are you one of those who believe in God? ... you do not pursue any goals; is your life not the most ignoble of all? Do you have the gall to look upon God? If you continue to experience in this way, will you not acquire nothing? The true way has been given to you, but whether or not you can ultimately gain it depends on your own personal pursuit"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. The Experiences of Peter: His Knowledge of Chastisement and Judgment). God's word revealed my state. From the start of my belief in God, I thought that as long as I made an effort for God and performed my duty, God would bless my family with peace and prosperity, and everyone would be free from illness and disaster. Therefore, ever since I started believing in God, I was always eager to perform my duties. God was very gracious to me. Before I knew it, some of my ailments were healed, and my pursuit became even stronger. Even if I was arrested by the Communist Party, I continued to perform my duty after I was

released. But when my granddaughter got this terrifying disease, inside I complained that God didn't protect her. Although I continued to perform my duty, I just wanted God to protect my granddaughter by curing her illness. I wanted to exchange my outward effort and sacrifice for God's blessing. When my granddaughter's illness did not improve, her life was put in danger, and the hospital gave up treatment, I completely fell apart. I misunderstood and complained against God, thought God was unrighteous, and became negative and resistant to God. I saw that I believed in God only to gain grace and blessings, that I pursued ease in life and physical safety instead of the truth, and that my sacrifices and efforts were not sincere submission to God, but were instead full of extravagant desires and requirements for God. This was deceiving God and attempting to make a transaction with Him. Later, I read a passage of God's word: **"God will do what He ought to do, and His disposition is righteous. Righteousness is by no means fairness or reasonableness; it is not egalitarianism, or a matter of allocating to you what you deserve in accordance with how much work you have completed, or paying you for whatever work you have done, or giving you your due according to what effort you expend. This is not righteousness, it is merely being fair and reasonable. Very few people are capable of knowing God's righteous disposition. Suppose God had eliminated Job after Job bore witness for Him: Would this be righteous? In fact, it would be. Why is this called righteousness? How do people view righteousness? If something is in line with people's notions, it is then very easy for them to say that God is righteous; however, if they do not see that thing as being in line with their notions—if it is something that they are incapable of comprehending—then it would be difficult for them to say that God is righteous. If God had destroyed Job back then, people would not have**

said He was righteous. Actually, though, whether people have been corrupted or not, and whether they have been profoundly corrupted or not, does God have to justify Himself when He destroys them? Should He have to explain to people upon what basis it is that He does so? Must God tell people the rules He has ordained? There is no need. In God's eyes, someone who is corrupt, and who is liable to oppose God, is without any worth; however God handles them will be appropriate, and all are the arrangements of God. If you were displeasing to God's eyes, and if He said that He had no use for you after your testimony and therefore destroyed you, would this, too, be His righteousness? It would. You might not be able to recognize this right now from the facts, but you must understand in doctrine. What would you say—is God's destruction of Satan an expression of His righteousness? (Yes.) What if He allowed Satan to remain? You dare not say, yes? God's essence is righteousness. Though it is not easy to comprehend what He does, all that He does is righteous; it is simply that people do not understand. When God gave Peter to Satan, how did Peter respond? 'Mankind is unable to fathom what You do, but all of what You do contains Your good will; there is righteousness in all of it. How can I not utter praise for Your wisdom and deeds?' ... Everything that God does is righteous. Though humans may not be able to perceive God's righteousness, they should not make judgments at will. If something He does appears to humans as unreasonable, or if they have any notions about it, and that leads them to say that He is not righteous, then they are being most unreasonable. You see that Peter found some things to be incomprehensible, but he was sure that God's wisdom was present and that His good will was in those things. Humans cannot fathom everything; there are so many things that they cannot grasp. Thus, to

**know God's disposition is not an easy thing"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Part Three). After contemplating God's word, I realized that God's righteousness is not as I imagined it to be. I imagined it as doing a certain amount of work and receiving the equivalent pay for it, or making an effort and receiving a reward in return. This was my own notion and imagining. God is the truth, and God's essence is righteousness. No matter what God does and whether or not it conforms to human notions, what God does is righteous. I evaluated God's righteousness from the point of view of making a transaction or a trade. I believed I would receive God's blessings if I made an effort and forsook much. I thought if I worked hard to perform my duties, God ought to protect my family and keep my granddaughter from illness and disaster. So, when she became seriously ill, I reasoned with God, complained against God, and thought God was unrighteous. My view was absurd. I was blind and didn't know God at all. I am a created being, so performing my duty and repaying God's love is natural and right, it is my duty and responsibility. I should not have tried to make deals with God. Just as children should be filial to their parents, I should unconditionally submit to His orchestrations and arrangements, regardless of whether He gives me grace and blessings or causes me to suffer disasters, as God is righteous. Otherwise, I would not be worthy of being called a human. People who do not believe in God experience birth, old age, sickness, death, disaster, blessings, and misfortune, and those who believe in God are no exception. God never claimed that believers would always be safe and secure. Instead, no matter what situations come to us, God requires us to have genuine faith and submission, and to fulfill the duty of a created being. But I believed in God only to seek blessings. I asked God to keep my family safe and free from illness and disaster, but I didn't seek the truth and submit to God. Mine was simply a religious belief that I used to seek to eat my fill of

loaves. God doesn't recognize such belief at all. Without the revelation of these facts, I would never recognize my erroneous view of believing in God just to seek blessings. I would never gain the truth believing in this way, but would only be eliminated by God. God allowed for a situation that did not conform to my notions to befall me as a means to purify my desire for blessings in belief in God, to cleanse my adulteration and corruption, and to change and save me. This was God's love! Thinking of this, I felt a little release.

Next, I continued to reflect on what nature dictated my transactional belief in God. I read God's word: **"All corrupt humans live for themselves. Every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost—this is the summation of human nature. People believe in God for their own sake; when they forsake things and expend themselves for God, it is in order to be blessed, and when they are loyal to Him, it is in order to be rewarded. In sum, it is all done for the purpose of being blessed, rewarded, and entering the kingdom of heaven. In society, people work for their own benefit, and in the house of God, they perform a duty in order to be blessed. It is for the sake of gaining blessings that people forsake everything and can withstand much suffering: There is no better evidence of man's satanic nature"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Part Three). **"God asks people to treat Him as God because mankind has been too deeply corrupted, and people don't treat Him as God, but rather as a person. What is the problem with people always making demands of God? And what is the problem with them always having notions about God? What is contained within man's nature? I've discovered that, regardless of what happens to them, or what they're dealing with, people always protect their own interests and worry about their own flesh, and they always look for reasons or**

excuses that serve them. They don't seek or accept the truth in the slightest, and everything they do is in order to defend their own flesh and plotting for the sake of their own prospects. They all solicit grace from God, wanting to gain whatever advantages they can. Why do people make so many demands of God? This proves that people are greedy by nature, and that before God, they are not possessed of any reason at all. In everything people do—whether they are praying or fellowshiping or preaching—their pursuits, thoughts, and aspirations, these things are all demands of God and attempts to solicit things from Him, they are all done by people in the hope of gaining something from God. Some people say that 'this is human nature,' which is correct! In addition, people making too many demands of God and having too many extravagant desires proves that people are truly lacking in conscience and reason. They are all demanding and soliciting things for their own sakes, or trying to argue and find excuses for themselves—they do all of this for themselves. In many things, it can be seen that what people do is totally devoid of reason, which is full proof that the satanic logic of 'Every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost' has already become man's nature" (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. People Make Too Many Demands of God). I contemplated God's word and realized I believed in God to seek blessings and benefits because I was controlled by satanic toxins such as "Every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost" and "Never lift a finger without a reward." Living by these satanic poisons made me especially selfish and deceitful. I only sought benefits and tried to make transactions with God in performing my duty. Although I had made so much effort and paid a price in my years of belief in God, I did all of it for the sake of my own blessings and benefits. I wanted to exchange the small price I paid for God's great blessings. I

wasn't submitting to God and being loyal to Him. As a result, when my granddaughter became seriously ill and my ambition for blessings was dashed, I felt aggrieved and complained against God, and I felt no motivation to perform my duty. I used the little effort I made and the price I paid as capital to argue with and oppose God. I saw that in the performance of my duty, I was deceiving God, making demands of God, and attempting to trade with God. I had been corrupted too deeply by Satan, and I was too selfish and deceitful. I thought of Paul, who preached, worked, forsook, made an effort, suffered a great deal, and even died as a martyr. However, he did not pursue the truth or practice the words of the Lord Jesus. All of his forsaking and effort was done to gain rewards and a crown. He said that he had fought the fight and finished his course, and there was a crown of righteousness reserved for him. He meant that God was righteous only if God gave him rewards and a crown, and that if God didn't reward or crown him, then God was not righteous. From this, we can see that Paul's suffering and effort in his belief in God were all done to make a transaction with God. In the end, he offended God's disposition and was punished by God. I was the same. I only believed in God to pursue grace and blessings, and I considered my forsaking and effort as a method and capital to gain blessings. If I didn't change my erroneous viewpoint of pursuit, no matter how much effort I made, I would never gain God's approval. I would be revealed and eliminated by God, just like Paul. I then read another passage of God's word: **"As a created being, man should seek to fulfill the duty of a created being, and seek to love God without making other choices, for God is worthy of man's love. Those who seek to love God should not seek any personal benefits or seek that which they personally long for; this is the most correct means of pursuit. If what you seek is the truth, if what you put into practice is the truth, and if what you attain is a**

**change in your disposition, then the path that you tread is the right one”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Success or Failure Depends on the Path That Man Walks). After reading God’s word, I understood that I am a created being who enjoys the food, water, and abundance of life granted by God. I should pursue the truth, perform my duty well, and pursue submission and love for God. This is the conscience and reason a created being should possess. I thought of how God incarnated twice to save humankind, how He suffered ridicule, slander, and rejection from the world, as well as persecution and condemnation from the Communist Party and the religious world. Despite this, however, He still silently expressed the truth to water and provide for us. He also set up many situations to reveal our corruption, to purify and change us. Although there was still much rebelliousness and corruption within me, and I could misunderstand and complain against God when things didn’t go my way, God never gave up on saving me. He used His words to judge, expose, remind, exhort, comfort, and encourage me as He waited for me to correct my ways. God’s love is so selfless, and He is so lovable! But I had believed in God solely to gain blessings and benefits, and I didn’t pursue love and submission to God. I truly had no conscience or reason. As I recognized this, I felt a deep sense of reproach and remorse, and I felt very indebted to God.

A few days later, the hospital issued another notice that my granddaughter was critically ill, and they discharged her to free up her bed for other patients. When I heard this news, I felt very sad, so I prayed to God, “God, You gave my granddaughter breath. Whatever You do and arrange is appropriate and righteous. Even if she dies, I will have no complaints. I will still believe in You and follow You.” After that, my son took her to another hospital in the provincial capital for treatment. The doctor read my granddaughter’s medical records and said he could not



accept her, as her illness could not be cured, so my son returned without hospitalizing her. At this time, I thought, “If God has ordained that my granddaughter will die, no one can save her. If God doesn’t want her to die, so long as she still has one breath, nothing can end her life. Everything is in God’s hands. I will submit to God’s sovereignty and arrangements.” When I thought about it this way, I didn’t feel as bad as I had. A few days later, when I went to see my granddaughter, I saw her in torment from the pain. Her face was so thin that she was unrecognizable. It broke my heart, and I couldn’t stop myself from crying. The thought that my granddaughter would die still made me very sad, and I didn’t want to face it. I silently prayed to God, “God, I can’t overcome this situation on my own. Please watch over my heart and guide me in submitting to You.” At this moment, I thought of Abraham’s experience of offering up Isaac. God asked Abraham to offer his son as a burnt offering. At the time, Abraham was also very distressed, but he still put Isaac on the altar as God required. When he raised his knife to kill his son, God saw Abraham’s sincerity and submission and stopped him. Abraham had true faith and submission to God, and he stood firm in his testimony for God in the face of trial, for which he received God’s approval and blessings. Abraham’s experience encouraged me. Thinking of myself, when I saw my granddaughter at death’s door, I said I would submit to God’s sovereignty and arrangements, but still couldn’t let go. When I saw her suffering, I still didn’t want to face it. I still hoped for a miracle, that God could cure my granddaughter and let her live a happy life. In my heart, I made demands of God time and again, and I had no reason or submission at all. I thought of God’s word: **“Who of the whole of mankind is not cared for in the eyes of the Almighty? Who does not live in the midst of the Almighty’s predestination? Does man’s life and death happen by his own choice? Does man control his own**

**fate? Many people cry out for death, yet it is far away from them; many people want to be those who are strong in life and fear death, yet unbeknownst to them, the day of their demise draws near, plunging them into the abyss of death”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. God’s Words to the Entire Universe, Chapter 11). Yes, people’s lives and deaths, fortune and misfortune, are all in God’s hands. When people are born and when people die are preordained by God. People have no choice in the matter. Whether my granddaughter’s illness could be cured and how long she would live were entirely in God’s hands. No human had any influence over this. Thinking of this, I prayed to God. Regardless of whether my granddaughter’s illness could be cured or not, I was ready to submit to God’s sovereignty and arrangements.

One day, a sister told me about a home remedy. I made it for my granddaughter according to the method my sister described. I didn’t know if it would cure her, but I thought it was worth a try. Unexpectedly, my granddaughter’s illness began to improve day by day, the fever gradually subsided, and soon she was out of danger. Before long, we found another remedy, and after taking it for a while my granddaughter’s leg didn’t hurt anymore! I was very grateful to God. A few months later, my granddaughter could walk a few steps while holding onto something for support, and her illness gradually improved. A year later, she was able to live and walk normally, and the damage to her heart was repaired. Later, when the experts from the hospital in the provincial capital learned my granddaughter not only wasn’t dead, but had actually fully recovered, they couldn’t believe it was true. We had spent so much money trying to treat her illness at that hospital, but they couldn’t cure her. Several major hospitals had sentenced my granddaughter to death, but when I let go of my desire for blessings, was willing to submit to God’s sovereignty and arrangements,

and handed my granddaughter over to God, her illness was unexpectedly cured using a few inexpensive home remedies. I truly saw God's omnipotence and sovereignty. Now, there is nothing wrong with my granddaughter aside from a minor limp and a slightly faster heart rate. People familiar with her illness say it's a miracle that she recovered like she did.

God's words say: **"In their belief in God, what people seek is to obtain blessings for the future; this is their goal in their faith. All people have this intent and hope, but the corruption in their nature must be resolved through trials and refinement. In whichever aspects you are not purified and reveal corruption, these are the aspects in which you must be refined—this is God's arrangement. God creates an environment for you, forcing you to be refined there so that you can know your own corruption. Ultimately, you reach a point at which you would rather die in order to give up your schemes and desires and to submit to God's sovereignty and arrangement. Therefore, if people do not have several years of refinement, if they do not endure a certain amount of suffering, they will not be able to rid themselves of the constraints of corruption of the flesh in their thoughts and in their hearts. In whichever aspects people are still subject to the constraints of their satanic nature, and in whichever aspects they still have their own desires and their own demands, these are the aspects in which they should suffer. Only through suffering can lessons be learned, which means being able to gain truth, and understand God's intentions. In fact, many truths are understood by experiencing painful trials. Nobody can understand God's intentions, recognize God's almightiness and wisdom, or appreciate God's righteous disposition when in a comfortable and easy environment or when circumstances are**

**favorable. That would be impossible!”** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Part Three). Through this experience, I gained some understanding of the desire for blessings and the impurities in my own belief in God. My view on faith has changed, and I have gained a real understanding of God’s almighty sovereignty and righteous disposition. I truly felt it was a good thing to experience these hardships, and this was God’s cleansing and salvation for me.

## 40. Shackled

By Li Mo, China

In 2004, I accepted Almighty God's work of the last days, and before long, I was reported for spreading the gospel. On that day, I was working at the hospital, and my colleague told me the hospital director was looking for me. I went into the director's office and saw two tall, uniformed police officers standing there. They said to me, "Someone reported that you believe in Eastern Lightning and have been going around preaching the gospel. Eastern Lightning is a key national crackdown target, and its believers are all political criminals who will be sentenced to prison!" They also threatened me, saying that if I continued to believe in God, they could ban me from my job any time they wanted, and I might not get paid even if I went to work. Even my husband's job, and my son's eligibility to go to university, join the army or go abroad would suffer. They said I would be sent to prison if they ever caught me preaching. I was worried by this, and thought, "The police aren't going to drop this if I don't give up my faith. If I lose my job and my husband's business suffers, how are we going to get by? Who would take care of my young son if I'm arrested and sent to prison? What a wretched mother that would make me, if his prospects have to suffer because of my faith." The more I thought about it, the more distressed I became. I quickly called out to God to protect my heart. At that moment, I thought of a passage of God's word: **"From the moment you come crying into this world, you begin to fulfill your duty. For God's plan and for His ordination, you perform your role and start your life's journey. Whatever your background, and whatever the journey ahead of you, no one can escape the orchestrations and arrangements of Heaven, and no one is in control of their own destiny, for only He who**

**rules over all things is capable of such work”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. God Is the Source of Man’s Life). I contemplated God’s word, and then I understood: The destiny of all comes under the rule of God. Whatever would happen to our family was in God’s hands, and was not for any one person to decide. God is the Creator, and it is natural and right for people to believe in God and worship God. But now the police were using my and my husband’s jobs, and my son’s future, to threaten me and force me to abandon the true way and betray God. How utterly despicable! There and then, I made up my mind that no matter how my life unfolded, I would never compromise with Satan. The police went on to demand that I report my brothers and sisters, but I ignored this, and eventually they went away.

After that, they often came by the hospital to ask if I still believed in God and was spreading the gospel. Sometimes I had to break off in the middle of an operation, no matter how urgent it was. It was starting to make me angry. I thought, I hadn’t done anything bad, I was only believing in God and following the right path, so why were the police harassing me and preventing me from doing my job in peace? The fact that I was under constant investigation caused a ruckus in the hospital. Colleagues saw me as a dangerous person. Some talked about me behind my back, and some asked directly, “What are you doing believing in God? Why are the police always investigating you? Your faith has brought the police right to our door. It’s really serious.” The director’s attitude toward me also changed. He had always regarded me highly, but after that incident, every time he saw me, he asked, “You haven’t been out preaching, have you?” He also told me to keep my phone on 24/7, so that I was always reachable. Once, the director told me, “The police have been here a number of times because of your belief in God. You need to stop believing. You’ve always done your job well, and everyone has a high opinion of you. Don’t let faith ruin your

future. It's not worth it. It's going to be a big problem for me too, as your boss, if you get arrested or worse." I felt miserable and depressed throughout that period, under constant surveillance by my director and getting wary looks from my colleagues. I prayed to God for faith and strength, and asked Him to help me stand strong under these trying circumstances. Then, I read a passage of God's word: **"The great red dragon persecutes God and is the enemy of God, and so, in this land, those who believe in God are thus subjected to humiliation and oppression.... Because it is embarked upon in a land that opposes God, all of God's work faces tremendous obstacles, and accomplishing many of His words takes time; thus, people are refined as a result of God's words, which is also part of suffering. It is tremendously difficult for God to carry out His work in the land of the great red dragon—but it is through this difficulty that God does one stage of His work, making manifest His wisdom and His wondrous deeds, and using this opportunity to make this group of people complete"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Is the Work of God As Simple As Man Imagines?). From God's word, I understood His intention. China is ruled by the Communist Party and is where God is most acutely resisted. People of faith, in China, will inevitably be persecuted and humiliated, but God uses Communist Party persecution as a means of perfecting our faith, thereby creating a body of overcomers. Such is God's wisdom. Because of my believing in God and walking the right path, I was being subjected to harassment and monitoring by the police along with humiliation and criticism from colleagues and friends. And behind it all there was a purpose. I didn't feel so bad, once I understood this. I promised myself that no matter how the Communist Party tried to persecute and obstruct me, I would follow God to the end.

My husband was away on business at the time, and I didn't tell him about the police investigation because I didn't want to worry him. He returned from his travels in January 2005, and was alarmed when he learned what had happened. Very sternly, he told me he'd found out that believers in Almighty God were political criminals who could be arrested and jailed at any time, and could be beaten half to death in detention. He said our son's future and our relatives' jobs would suffer, and he asked me to stop believing in Almighty God. I thought, "My husband's belief in the Lord is in name only. He doesn't really understand anything. It's normal that he has these concerns. The Communist Party persecutes us believers so much, even going after our family members. Who wouldn't be afraid?" I also thought of how he had been away on business the whole time, meaning that I hadn't had a chance to testify to Almighty God's work of the last days to him. We needed this opportunity for a proper talk, so I fellowshiped a lot with him, but he didn't listen at all. He simply brushed it off, saying that life was going well and that we should just enjoy the grace of the Lord Jesus and there's no need to accept the work of judgment. He was afraid of our family being dragged into it if I was arrested, so he started trying to stop me from believing in God. After that, he began to watch me very closely. If I wasn't home on time after work, he called to ask where I was and urge me to come home, and he stopped going out to see his friends in the evening, which was unlike him. Instead, he just sat at home watching me. When it was time for me to attend a gathering, he would find other things for me to do for him. He essentially tried every means to stop me from believing in God or performing my duties. At the start, I felt very constrained, but later, I recalled a passage of God's word: **"You must possess My courage within you, and you must have principles when it comes to facing relatives who do not believe. For My sake, however, you also must not yield to**



**any dark forces. Rely on My wisdom to walk the perfect way; do not allow any of Satan's conspiracies to take hold"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Utterances of Christ in the Beginning, Chapter 10). As I pondered God's word, I understood that to all appearances it was my husband trying to hinder my belief in God, but behind the scenes Satan was manipulating and disrupting things, using tricks to get me to betray and deny God. I couldn't give in to Satan. Later, I found excuses to avoid my husband's surveillance, and went to gatherings and did my duties in secret. I was also looking out for chances to talk with my husband, hoping he would not be afraid of Communist Party persecution and would seek to examine the work of Almighty God. But my husband always excused himself, saying he would believe when priests and nuns started believing. He also asked me not to go to gatherings or go spreading the gospel, so as not to get arrested and sent to prison. I saw that my husband wasn't interested at all in the truth or receiving the Lord's coming, so I stopped talking to him about it. I thought, "No matter what, I have to believe in God and do my duty. I can't be constrained by him."

After the Spring Festival that year, my husband stayed at home to watch me rather than going back on the road for business. One day, he dropped to his knees in tears and implored me, "You're always going out for gatherings and to preach the gospel. How will we get by in the future if you are arrested and sent to prison? What will happen to this family, what will happen to our son? You have to think about our family, and our son's future." To be honest, in all those years together I'd never seen my husband cry. It felt awful to see him on his knees like this, begging me, and I started crying too. To console him, I said, "Everything is in God's hands. Whether I will be arrested, and what happens to our son in the future—it's all ordained by God. Ours is to lean on God and live the experience. We don't need to

fret about these things.” My husband, with tears in his eyes, shook his head and said, “The police are already onto you. You’re going to get arrested sooner or later if you carry on believing like this, and then everything will be ruined.” Seeing my husband in such anguish, I felt bitterly aggrieved. This was all the Communist Party’s doing! We believe in God and spread the gospel so that people can accept God’s salvation of the last days and survive the disaster. This is saving people, and nothing is more just, but the Communist Party frantically tries to obstruct and disrupt us. They are nothing but Satans and demons opposed to God! God’s words say: **“Forefathers of the ancient? Beloved leaders? They all oppose God! Their meddling has left all beneath heaven in a state of darkness and chaos! Religious freedom? The legitimate rights and interests of citizens? They are all tricks for covering up sin! ... Why put up such an impenetrable obstacle to the work of God? Why employ various tricks to deceive God’s folk? Where is the true freedom and the legitimate rights and interests? Where is the fairness? Where is the comfort? Where is the warmth? Why use deceitful schemes to trick God’s people?”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Work and Entry (8)).

Ostensibly, the Communist Party promotes religious freedom, but actually they suppress and arrest believers, and they use people’s jobs and families to force them to deny and betray God. Utterly despicable! If not for the Communist Party’s persecution, things would never have come to this between my husband and me, and my husband wouldn’t have been so fearful. Wherever the dark hand of the Communist Party reaches, it brings disaster. My husband was afraid, and wanted to protect his work and our family, and for that reason he was going along with the Communist Party by pushing me to abandon my faith. But I wasn’t going to do as he said. I had to fortify my faith and go with God.

After that, my husband read a lot of Communist Party slander against The Church of Almighty God online, and simply stayed at home watching me rather than going on his business travels. He also asked around to find out who my faith brought me into contact with and who I called. He even went to the telecom company to have my six-month call log printed out, and then asked me about the numbers one by one. To monitor me, he escorted me to and from work every day. He followed me wherever I went and wouldn't let me leave the house on my own. I had no freedom at all—it was like being shackled. I couldn't live the church life and I couldn't perform my duty, which made me feel really bad, so I took advantage of my husband's laxness to slip out and preach the gospel. One time, he said angrily, "If you're still getting out and preaching, even with my eyes on you all the time, then there's really nothing I can do. It's the Communist Party that rules now, and it won't allow you to follow your faith. If you carry on like this you will be arrested sooner or later and the family will be broken up. So let's divorce. You can believe what you want once we're divorced, without there being repercussions for our son or anyone else." I couldn't believe it when I heard he wanted a divorce. All I was doing was believing in God. How had it come to this? Did all our years together count for nothing? The thought of my own perfectly good family being torn apart by the Communist Party was terribly distressing. This was something I couldn't bear to accept. I prayed to God, "God, please give me faith and strength, so that I can stand strong in these trying circumstances." After I prayed, I remembered this passage of God's word: **"The utmost faith and love are required from us in this stage of work. We may stumble from the slightest carelessness, for this stage of work is different from all the previous ones: What God is perfecting is mankind's faith, which is both invisible and intangible. What God does is convert words to faith, to**

**love, and to life. People must reach a point where they have endured hundreds of refinements and possess faith greater than Job's. They must endure incredible suffering and all manner of torture without ever leaving God. When they are submissive unto death, and have great faith in God, then this stage of God's work is complete"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. The Path ... (8)). I contemplated God's word, and then I understood that in His work of the last days, God uses His words and various trials and refinements to perfect people's faith and love. I thought of Satan's temptations of Job. He lost his children and wealth overnight, and then was covered in terrible boils. In the midst of such enormous tribulations, Job never complained, but continued praising God's name. Through all his trials, he stood firm in his witness for God. Then I thought about myself. My family was coming apart because of Communist Party persecution, and I was already complaining. I saw that I really was small of stature, and had no testimony at all. I felt very remorseful, so I prayed to God, promising that even if my husband divorced me, I would not abandon the truth for the sake of flesh and family.

A few days later, my husband unexpectedly apologized to me and said he was wrong. He said he shouldn't have mentioned divorce, and only did so because of the Communist Party's vicious coercion. A while later, he suddenly said, "If I can't persuade you, then I'll join you in believing in Almighty God." I was thrown by this sudden about-face but I felt he must have thought it through, so the two of us read God's word together at home. A week later, he asked me to take him to a gathering. I thought his behavior was a little strange, so I didn't agree. I was taken by surprise when he turned on me and said, "If you don't take me to a gathering, I won't believe anymore." He also said he did this to persuade me to change my mind. Only then did I realize my husband was pretending to believe in Almighty God,

and his purpose was to find where we held our gatherings so that he could better monitor and control me. I hadn't expected him to do anything that ridiculous. From then on, we were in a cold war. One day, I was reading God's word at home, when my husband pounded on the door, calling out, "We can't go on like this." When I opened the door he charged in like a madman and gripped me by the neck, shouting, "Why do you have to believe in Almighty God? Is He really more important to you than family and son?" His grip was so tight that it hurt and I couldn't breathe, so I desperately called to God to save me. I struggled, and he let go. I was terribly upset about what had happened, and deeply saddened. Later, I read a passage of God's word: **"Why does a husband love his wife? Why does a wife love her husband? Why are children dutiful to their parents? Why do parents dote on their children? What sorts of intentions do people actually harbor? Is their intent not to satisfy their own plans and selfish desires?"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. God and Man Will Enter Into Rest Together). As I contemplated God's word, I asked myself if my husband really loved me. I thought back on all our years of marriage. My husband clearly knew better than anyone about the sacrifices I had made for our family, and he knew I had believed in the Lord since I was a child and looked forward to the Lord's coming. But when I welcomed the Lord, he didn't support me. In fact, he sided with the Communist Party against me, threatening divorce and even trying to strangle me. All to protect his own interests. There was not even the barest of respect that should bind husband and wife. How could this be called love? I also thought of how, although my husband believed in the Lord Jesus, he only did so to obtain grace. He didn't look forward to the coming of the Lord at all. Such was his fear of being arrested by the Communist Party, and of Satan's regime, that he didn't accept God's work of the last days when God

came to express the truth and do the work of salvation. And he went along with the Communist Party in trying to force me away from my faith. I saw that my husband wasn't a true believer in God at all. He was a disbeliever. God's words say: **"Believers and nonbelievers are not compatible; rather, they are opposed to one another"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. God and Man Will Enter Into Rest Together). My husband and I weren't on the same path at all, so I couldn't let him constrain me. Following that, my husband threatened me with divorce several more times when he saw I wasn't going to abandon my faith. I couldn't bear the thought of really losing my family, so I prayed to God every day, asking Him to guide me.

One day, I saw a passage of God's word: **"As someone who is normal, and who pursues the love of God, entry into the kingdom to become one of the people of God is your true future, and a life that is of the utmost value and significance; no one is more blessed than you. Why do I say this? Because those who do not believe in God live for the flesh, and they live for Satan, but today you live for God, and live to follow the will of God. That is why I say your lives are of the utmost significance. Only this group of people, who have been selected by God, are able to live out a life of the utmost significance: No one else on earth is able to live out a life of such value and meaning"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Know God's Newest Work and Follow His Footsteps). I used to think that having a happy family, having a loving relationship with my husband and having my material needs fulfilled, was the definition of happiness, and that living this way was meaningful. But now, I saw clearly that so-called conjugal love is fragile. As they say: A husband and a wife are like two birds in a grove; when calamity comes they fly their own ways. In the past, when I worked hard for my family and my husband, he cared deeply for me, but now that I had faith he felt the Communist Party's

persecution of believers was a threat to his own interests, so he had turned to persecuting me and demanding a divorce. To put it bluntly, our “love,” as husband and wife, was just two people using each other. Where’s the happiness in such a life? I thought of how he had been monitoring me over the previous months, and forbidden me from going to gatherings and performing my duties. I couldn’t meet with my brothers and sisters to fellowship on the truth, my heart wasn’t at peace when I read God’s word at home, and I had to think of ways to handle my husband when I went out preaching the gospel. I had no freedom of faith whatsoever, as if bound by an invisible rope that was squeezing the life out of me. If this went on, my life would suffer and I would also lose the chance to gain the truth and receive salvation. It wasn’t worth it. This was when I realized, more and more clearly, that family life with marital love was not true happiness. I could only live a meaningful life by pursuing the truth and doing the duties of a created being. I also remembered the words of the Lord Jesus: **“He that loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me: and he that loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he that takes not his cross, and follows after Me, is not worthy of Me”** (Matthew 10:37–38). I thought of the saints down the ages, and how, to carry out God’s commission, they had forsaken their homes and livelihoods and crossed oceans to preach the gospel and testify to God, enduring suffering and even giving up their lives. Their testimony earned God’s approval. And now God was being gracious to me, bringing me before Him to receive salvation of the last days. It was a once-only opportunity. If I couldn’t properly perform my duties because of my husband’s constraints, then I would be a heartless wretch, unworthy before God! Realizing that, I swore an oath that I would do as the saints of old, forsaking everything, following God, and

performing the duties of a created being. This is how I would live a life of meaning.

One evening I came home from a gathering and froze when I opened the door. The place was full of people. There were colleagues of mine, along with friends and relatives of my husband, and as soon as they saw me they all started talking at once, trying to persuade me to give up my faith. Some said they'd seen on the news that a lot of believers in Almighty God had recently been arrested by the Communist Party, and some had been sentenced to at least 10 years. Others said it wasn't just a matter of being arrested and sent to prison; many believers in Almighty God were crippled or killed in custody, and their families were dragged into it as well. Some also repeated the Communist Party's slanderous fallacies and rumors about the church, saying that believers in God abandon their families. Hearing all this made me very angry. "If not for Communist Party persecution," I thought, "my family wouldn't oppose and attack me like this. The Communist Party distorts facts and spreads rumors so that people who don't know the truth join with it in opposition to God. Together with it they are condemned by God, and together with it they will ultimately be destroyed. It's absolute evil!" I refuted what they had said, telling them, "Don't talk nonsense if you don't understand what it is to have faith. Why do I insist on believing in God despite these risks? It's because the Savior has come and expressed many truths, to save mankind from the influence of Satan and free us from disaster. It's a once-only opportunity! But the Communist Party doesn't permit faith in God. It frantically oppresses and persecutes people who believe in God, arresting and locking up so many of them. So many people can't return home, so many have been crippled and beaten to death, and so many Christian families have broken up. Isn't that all the doing of the Communist Party? It's patently the Communist Party



persecuting people of faith and breaking up Christian families, but they turn things around and say believers in God are abandoning their families. Isn't that inverting the truth? You don't hate the CCP but you want to stop me from believing in God. Can't you tell right from wrong? The path of faith was my own choice. Even if I go to prison, I am determined to follow Almighty God." They saw they couldn't persuade me, and eventually they all left. My husband said grimly, "It looks like no one can change your mind, so let's get a divorce. You believe in Almighty God, which means the state is going to attack and arrest you. When that happens, you'll lose your job, our family and maybe even your life. But the rest of us want to stay alive, so divorce is the only way. The Communist Party pushes people into impossible corners." My heart ached at this, but I knew for sure that the time to choose had come. I chose to believe in and follow God, and to pursue the truth and life, whereas my husband chose to go along with the Communist Party, for his job and for his future. So we had to go our separate ways. At the time, I prayed to God, "God, no matter what happens, I will follow You to the end." The next morning, my husband and I went to the Civil Affairs Bureau to carry out divorce proceedings, ending twelve years of married life. Since then, I've been able to go to gatherings and perform my duties normally, and I've felt very much at peace. I think that performing the duties of a created being is the only way to lead a life of meaning.

## 41. Envy Is a Despicable Thing

By Su Can, China

In June of 2021, I began training in watering newcomers. I knew I had a lot of inadequacies, so I'd often pray to God and dedicated myself to eating and drinking God's words. After a little while, I came to understand some of the truth principles and was able to shed a bit of light on issues in my fellowship. My brothers and sisters all said I fellowshipped really well. Despite saying, "Thanks be to God! This was all God's enlightenment," I felt quite pleased with myself inside. I was always the most visible member at each gathering and the others all looked up to me—this gave me even greater enthusiasm to do my duty actively. Later on, I was paired up with Brother Xiang Ming. He was new to the faith and was still lacking when it came to fellowshipping the truth, so it was quite difficult for him when he first started training to water newcomers, but he was dedicated to pursuing the truth and progressed quickly. He was also a very straightforward kind of guy and would open up and lay himself bare when revealing his corruption, and he focused on seeking the truth and reflecting on knowing himself when he ran into issues. The brothers and sisters all judged him to be someone who pursued the truth. When I observed this, I felt a bit threatened: "Xiang Ming is such a go-getter—if this keeps up, he'll catch up to me in no time. Then who will look up to me? This won't do, I've got to quickly arm myself with truth. I can't let him surpass me." After that, I worked even harder than before.

One time, Xiang Ming said to me: "I've come to understand many truths while performing my duty alongside the brothers and sisters, and I feel so happy and liberated. I would really like to quit my job and start doing my duty full-time, but there are a few obstacles standing in the way

and I'm not sure how to proceed." When I heard this, I immediately thought: "If he starts performing his duty full-time, he'll progress even faster and catch up with me in no time. What will I do if others start looking up to him and I get left behind? It would be better if he waited a little longer before quitting his job." So I said to him: "We must practice submitting and waiting. Pray to God and He will prepare an opportune moment for you." However, as soon as I said this, I felt a bit guilty. I thought: "Aren't I intentionally obstructing Xiang Ming from pursuing the truth?" But I was still worried that he might threaten my status, so I didn't say anything else. After that, Xiang Ming was able to resolve his issues by relying on God and quit his job just a week later. When I heard about this, not only wasn't I happy for Xiang Ming, I actually felt a bit dejected. Because I was worried that Xiang Ming would steal my thunder, I held back certain things when partnering with him. When I saw certain passages of God's words relevant to his state during devotionals, I wouldn't share them with him as I had in the past. When he came to me with questions about problems he was having, I wouldn't share all my insights with him, thinking: "It took me two years just to gain these few insights. If I tell him everything, he'll progress too quickly and all the brothers and sisters will look up to him. What will I do if that happens?" After some time, Xiang Ming and I became less close. We stopped speaking as freely with each other and no longer helped each other out. Apart from when we had to in our duties, we rarely interacted. My state got a little worse and I didn't get any clear sense of enlightenment when eating and drinking God's words. At the time, however, I didn't realize there was anything wrong with my state and didn't come before God to seek and reflect.

Later on, due to the requirements of the work, Xiang Ming and I had to split up and water newcomers separately. When I heard we'd be splitting

up, I secretly rejoiced: “Going forward, I won’t have to prepare content for gatherings with him anymore. Naturally, without my help he won’t progress as quickly. I just need to keep at it, improve my results and not let him catch up with me. Everyone will see that he’s incompetent and all the effort he puts in will just be in vain.” One time, after a gathering, Xiang Ming and I were chatting about how our gatherings were going with newcomers as we walked back home. He said he was feeling really down because some of the newcomers he was responsible for wouldn’t attend gatherings and he’d been unable to water them effectively. When I heard that, I thought: “He is having some issues and is becoming negative, I must help him right away.” But at the same time, I also secretly felt quite happy, thinking: “My gathering went quite well today, and the leader said I had fellowshipped really well.” Xiang Ming then asked me how my gathering had gone. I realized that if I told him it had gone well, he would just become more negative, but I just couldn’t help showing off a little bit. I wanted to show him how much further ahead of him I was and put a damper on his morale. So, in a self-satisfied tone, I told him, “My gathering went very well, actually.” When Xiang Ming heard that, he seemed to look even more depressed and didn’t say anything else. When I saw his dejected expression, I felt a bit guilty and thought: “Why couldn’t I just keep my mouth shut? Won’t this impact Xiang Ming’s enthusiasm for his work? That was just awful of me!” When we got home, we fellowshipped a bit more, but Xiang Ming’s state still didn’t improve. I thought: “I fellowshipped with him as best as I could, so it’s not my problem if his state is still poor.”

A few days later, as we were walking home after our gatherings, I asked Xiang Ming how his gathering had gone. He said he had fellowshipped God’s words on the issue of newcomers not wanting to attend gatherings and it had gone well. Hearing this, I felt a little unhappy. I

felt like this meant I couldn't contrast my own successful gathering with his less effective one. And so, I just directly pointed out the issues in his fellowship. As a result, his state sunk right back into despondency after finally having made some improvement. Xiang Ming replied: "This is all I know right now, and I can only fellowship with the newcomers on what I know." When he said this, I felt a little guilty, thinking: "I'm dampening Xiang Ming's enthusiasm again! Given that he's fairly new to the faith, being able to get some results from gatherings is a sign of progress. I should be encouraging him." I really wanted to apologize to him, but I felt a bit embarrassed and worried about what he might think of me. Would he think I was a vicious person if I told him? After going back and forth on the matter in my head, I eventually decided not to say anything to him. As we walked home, I wondered to myself: "Why would I dampen someone's enthusiasm like that?" I realized that I couldn't bear to see anyone else doing well and I'd become jealous of Xiang Ming. I worried that if he turned his state around and began getting good results, the brothers and sisters would start looking up to and praising him and would forget all about me. To make sure he didn't distinguish himself, I attacked him and made him become negative. Realizing this, I felt terrible and guilty. As soon as I got home, I prayed to God, telling Him I was ready to repent and make changes, and asking Him to guide me to recognize my corrupt disposition.

In the midst of my seeking, I came across some of God's words: **"Some people always fear that others are better than they are or above them, that other people will be recognized while they get overlooked, and this leads them to attack and exclude others. Is this not a case of being envious of people with talent? Is that not selfish and despicable? What kind of disposition is this? It is maliciousness! Those who only think about their own interests, who only satisfy their own selfish**

**desires, without thinking about others or considering the interests of God's house, have a bad disposition, and God has no love for them"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Freedom and Liberation Can Be Gained Only by Casting Off One's Corrupt Disposition). **"If someone says they love the truth and that they pursue the truth, but in essence, the goal they pursue is to distinguish themselves, to show off, to make people think highly of them, to achieve their own interests, and the performing of their duty is not to submit to or satisfy God, and instead is to achieve fame, gain, and status, then their pursuit is illegitimate. That being the case, when it comes to the work of the church, are their actions an obstacle, or do they help move it forward? They are clearly an obstacle; they do not move it forward. Some people wave the banner of doing the work of the church yet pursue their own personal fame, gain, and status, run their own operation, create their own little group, their own little kingdom—is this kind of person doing their duty? All the work they do essentially disrupts, disturbs, and impairs the work of the church. What is the consequence of their pursuit of fame, gain, and status? First, this affects how God's chosen people eat and drink God's word normally and understand the truth, it hinders their life entry, stops them from entering the right track of faith in God, and leads them onto the wrong path—which harms the chosen ones, and brings them to ruin. And what does it ultimately do to the work of the church? It is disturbance, impairment, and dismantlement. This is the consequence brought about by people's pursuit of fame, gain, and status. When they do their duty in this way, can this not be defined as walking the path of an antichrist? ... The problem with people pursuing their own interests is that the goals they pursue are the goals of Satan—they are goals that are wicked and unjust. When people pursue personal interests such as**

**fame, gain, and status, they unwittingly become a tool of Satan, they become an outlet for Satan, and, moreover, they become an embodiment of Satan. They play a negative role in the church; toward the work of the church, and toward the normal church life and normal pursuit of God's chosen people, the effect they have is to disturb and impair; they have an adverse and negative effect"** (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing

Antichrists. Item Nine (Part One)). God's words were a perfect exposure of my current state. When I noticed that Xiang Ming was making quick life progress and the brothers and sisters all looked up to him, I worried that he'd steal my thunder and deprive me of others' admiration, so I intentionally became distant from him. When I received enlightenment through eating and drinking God's words, I didn't want to share it with him. When he expressed a desire to go full-time in his duties, I intentionally said some things to try to hold him back. When he encountered some difficulties in his duty, wasn't getting good results and became despondent, I even bragged about how well my work was going in front of him, causing him to become more despondent. Then, when he finally started turning his state around and making progress, I intentionally attacked him by picking out flaws in his fellowship. Wasn't I being jealous of someone talented, just like God's words had exposed? Because I only considered my own reputation and status, I failed to realize that Xiang Ming living in negativity would affect his watering work and prevent newcomers from making progress in their lives. I was well aware of how important the watering work is, but I still attacked Xiang Ming. Wasn't I just acting as one of Satan's lackeys and disturbing and destroying the church's work? How selfish, despicable and vicious I was! The church had paired me with Xiang Ming so that we could complement each other's strengths and weaknesses and water the newcomers well. But not only had I failed to learn from Xiang Ming's

strengths and stopped us from helping each other and entering the truth together, I was also full of jealousy and resentment toward him and wouldn't share what truth I knew with him for fear that he'd surpass me. I was stuck in a jealous, selfish and despicable state. It was no wonder that my heart had become dark and depressed and I couldn't derive any clear enlightenment from eating and drinking God's words. God had turned His back on me. I was in a truly precarious state and had to repent to God as quickly as possible.

Later on, I came upon some of God's words: **"Antichrists' public suppression of people, exclusion of people, attacks against people, and exposure of people's problems are all targeted. Without a doubt, they use means such as these to target those who pursue the truth and can discern them. By breaking these people down, they achieve the goal of strengthening their own position. Attacking and excluding people like this is malicious in nature. There is aggression in their language and manner of speech: exposure, condemnation, slander, and evil calumny. They even twist facts, speaking of positive things as though they were negative and negative as though they were positive. Reversing black and white and mixing up right and wrong like this accomplishes antichrists' goal of defeating people and ruining their name. What mindset is giving rise to this attack and exclusion of dissenters? Most of the time, it comes from a jealous mindset. In a vicious disposition, jealousy carries strong hatred with it; and as a result of their jealousy, antichrists attack and exclude people. In a situation such as this, if antichrists are exposed, reported, lose their status, and suffer an attack in their mind, they will not submit nor be happy about it, and it will be even easier for them to create a strong mindset of revenge. Revenge is a type of mindset, and it is also a type of corrupt disposition. When**



**antichrists see that what someone did was damaging to them, that others are more capable than them, or that someone's statements and suggestions are better or wiser than theirs, and everyone agrees with that person's statements and suggestions, the antichrists feel their position is threatened, jealousy and hatred arise in their hearts, and they attack and take revenge. When taking revenge, antichrists generally deliver a preemptive blow to their target. They are proactive in attacking and breaking people down, until the other party submits. Only then do they feel they have let off steam. What other manifestations are there of attacking and excluding people? (Belittling others.) Belittling others is one of the ways it is manifested; no matter how good a job you do, antichrists will still belittle you or condemn you, until you are negative and weak and cannot stand. Then they will be happy, and they will have accomplished their goal"** (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Two: They Attack and Exclude Dissenters). **"Everything antichrists do is in order to win over people's hearts, to attack and exclude dissenters, to consolidate their status, to seize power, and to control people. What is the nature of these actions? Are they practicing the truth? Are they leading God's chosen people in entering God's words and coming before God? (No.) So what are they doing? They are vying with God for His chosen people, competing for people's hearts, and trying to set up their own, independent kingdom. Who should have a place in people's hearts? God should have a place. But everything the antichrists do is precisely the opposite of this. They do not allow God or the truth to have a place in people's hearts; instead, they want man, the leader that they are, and Satan to have a place in people's hearts"** (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item One: They Try to Win Over People's Hearts). Through God's words I learned that antichrists envy those more talented than them.

To safeguard and reinforce their own status, they attack and exclude others. In essence, they want a place in everyone's hearts and are vying with God for people. Wasn't this just how I acted toward Xiang Ming? Just when he started getting some results in his duty and was becoming less negative, I intentionally picked out faults in his work and asked him to meet a standard he couldn't yet reach. By making him think that the watering work was difficult and that he might not be up to the task, I drove him back into negativity. Reflecting on why I'd attacked Xiang Ming, I realized that I wanted all the brothers and sisters to look up to and worship me. I wanted them to think of me whenever someone asked who was most effective in their work and was most diligent in pursuing the truth. I longed to have a place in every brother's and sister's heart. In the administrative decrees that God issued during the Age of Kingdom, He stipulated that man can only exalt God, yet I kept trying to get everyone to think highly of and worship me. Wasn't I resisting God? Xiang Ming was a newcomer himself and hadn't laid a deep foundation—if he sunk into a prolonged period of negativity due to my attacks, it would influence his belief in God and his duty. He might even consider leaving the church. Even if he was steadfast in his faith, my attacks would still hold back his life entry and influence the life progress of the newcomers. God's work is coming to a close and there is not much time left for people to pursue the truth. If I don't help my brothers and sisters perform their duties well, and even dampen their enthusiasm for it, won't this delay and impact their life entry? Satan has its eyes on us and wants every last one of us to fall into negativity and weakness, distance ourselves from God and betray Him. And yet I was playing the role of Satan and serving as its lackey—I was so awful! My actions had clearly exposed my antichrist disposition. I was walking the path of an antichrist and if I didn't repent soon, God would spurn me.

Realizing this, I became a bit frightened and so I hurriedly prayed to God: “Oh God! I’ve been selfish and despicable, and I’ve become too obsessed with renown and status. I’m ready to rebel against myself and live by Your words. Please give me guidance.”

After prayer, I came upon the following passages of God’s words: **“When selfishness and schemes for your own profit appear in you, and you realize it, you should pray to God and seek the truth in order to address this. The first thing you should be aware of is that in essence, acting in this way is a violation of the truth principles, it is harmful to the work of the church, it is selfish and despicable behavior, it is not what people of conscience and reason ought to be doing. You should put aside your own interests and selfishness, and should think of the work of the church—this is in line with God’s intentions. After praying and reflecting on yourself, if you truly realize that acting thus is selfish and despicable, putting aside your own selfishness will be easy. When you put aside your selfishness and schemes for profit, you will feel grounded, you will be at peace, joyous, and will feel that a person of conscience and reason should think of the church’s work, that they should not fixate on their personal interests, which would be so selfish, despicable, and devoid of conscience or reason. Acting selflessly, thinking of the work of the church, and doing things exclusively to satisfy God is just and honorable, and will bring value to your existence. Living this way on earth, you are being open and honest, you are living out normal humanity, and the true image of man, and not only do you have a clear conscience, but are also worthy of all the things bestowed upon you by God. The more you live like this, the more grounded you will feel, the more peaceful and joyous you will be, and the brighter you will feel. As such, will you not have set foot upon the**

**right track of faith in God?”** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. In Giving One’s Heart to God, One Can Obtain the Truth). **“If you are truly capable of showing consideration for God’s intentions, you will be able to treat other people fairly. If you recommend a good person and allow them to undergo training and perform a duty, thereby adding a person of talent to God’s house, will that not make your work easier? Will you not then be showing loyalty in your duty? That is a good deed before God; it is the minimum conscience and reason that those who serve as leaders should possess”** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Freedom and Liberation Can Be Gained Only by Casting Off One’s Corrupt Disposition). God’s words gave me a path of practice: I should abandon my pursuit of self-interest, heed God’s intentions and safeguard the church’s work. Xiang Ming has caliber, so I should help him more so that he could shoulder the newcomer watering work as soon as possible. That was what a person with humanity should do. I thought of God’s words which say: **“The functions are not the same. There is one body. Each does his duty, each in his place and doing his very best—for each spark there is one flash of light—and seeking maturity in life. Thus will I be satisfied”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Utterances of Christ in the Beginning, Chapter 21). God gives each one of us different talents so that we can use them to perform each of our own duties well in the church. This is what we ought to do as created beings. Xiang Ming and I both had specific roles to play in the church, so I shouldn’t have envied him and excluded him. I should cooperate with him harmoniously and work together to fulfill our duties and bear witness to God—only this way of working is of value.

Later on, I opened up in fellowship with Xiang Ming about my state during that time and what I’d come to understand about myself. After our fellowship, I felt much more peaceful and grounded. I felt like I was once

again living in the light, like I could at last take in a deep breath of fresh air after a long bout of panting and gasping. I finally felt at ease and Xiang Ming and I grew a lot closer as well. After that, we resolved to cooperate harmoniously together to water the newcomers. From then on, we would often open up to each other about our current states and would share various paths of practice we'd found for watering newcomers. Whenever Xiang Ming encountered difficulties, I'd do my best to fellowship on the truth to help him. I also benefited from Xiang Ming's strengths. For instance, I gained a lot from certain insights he shared during fellowship that I'd never thought of myself. Through this, I realized that opening up to and fellowshipping with others on our experiences and things we've gained is not merely a matter of supplying others, but it is also a way of practicing the truth that can help us improve our own weaknesses and attain more of the Holy Spirit's work. In truth, by setting the right intentions, learning from others' strengths to offset our weaknesses, and practicing according to God's words, we all benefit and make progress in our lives.

## **42. What I Gained From Discerning an Evil Person**

By Neil, Japan

In August 2015, I learned that Sister Nicole had been replaced, mainly because she did not do actual work and competed with others for reputation and status, as well as judging her partner in front of other brothers and sisters, all of which disrupted the work of the church. After Nicole was dismissed, through fellowship and being pruned, she gained some understanding of her transgressions and corrupt dispositions. She showed great remorse and blamed herself, and was willing to repent. Alina, one of my partners, had formerly been Nicole's partner. When she heard that Nicole had been classified as a false leader, she said, "After Nicole became a leader, she set herself above everyone else. She was quite standoffish with me, and haughty, and was very arrogant. She also formed cliques and engaged in jealous disputes to gain status. Only an antichrist could do such things. It's not enough to call her a false leader; she should be classified as an antichrist." She also planned to ask the upper leaders to reclassify Nicole. Another partner, Rachel, having heard what Alina said, agreed. At the time, I thought, "Nicole is self-important and aloof and has a seriously arrogant disposition, but she didn't do any great evil, nor was she constantly causing disruptions and disturbances, and after she was replaced, she was able to repent, reflect, and gain self-knowledge. She isn't one of those who accept no truth at all. If we classify her as an antichrist based only on the limited corruption she has revealed and one or two passing transgressions, wouldn't that be going too far? Wrongly classifying her would be treating a good person unjustly." So, I stated my views. But not only did Alina not accept this, she added: "You don't understand some of Nicole's behavior.

We have to stick to principles. We can't let off any of the antichrists." At the time, I felt a little uneasy, but what Alina did next surprised me even more.

One day Alina got Rachel to collect evaluations of Nicole, and without consulting upper leaders she privately arranged a gathering of brothers and sisters to discern and dissect Nicole. At the gathering, Alina reiterated at length how Nicole had previously behaved arrogantly, and emphasized in particular that Nicole had acted arbitrarily, but she didn't say whether this was habitual behavior or a passing instance of corruption. Nor did she mention whether Nicole had been able to accept the truth later, and subsequently repented. One sister felt that the gathering seemed to be about oppressing and condemning Nicole, and subsequently alerted Rachel: "What are you actually trying to achieve by doing this? Is this in line with God's intention? You can't just classify others without sufficient evidence. That's liable to offend God." Rachel was a little afraid after hearing this, and she also felt that treating Nicole like this might be a little excessive, so she spoke to me and Alina about her doubts. Alina replied crossly, "Every time we want to practice the truth, Satan disrupts things." Finally, she dissected Nicole's behavior again, and emphasized that because Nicole was jealous of her partner, she had formed a clique, judged, and oppressed that partner. She also said that Nicole had acted arbitrarily and without consulting with others, and dismissed people at will. Seeing the seriousness of the behavior that Alina was talking about, Rachel was convinced, and again took Alina's side. At this time, I was also a little unsure. Was the view of Alina and Rachel correct? When I heard Alina fellowship so forcefully on God's words revealing the formation of cliques by antichrists, I was even more confused and felt that her analysis might be right. Could it be that the upper leaders had not properly identified Nicole, mistaking an antichrist for

a false leader and allowing her to remain? And if so, had I not become someone who spoke for an antichrist without discerning the antichrist? In which case, I might lose my position. I could be accused of shielding an antichrist and end up being totally discredited. Perhaps I would be better off taking Alina and Rachel's side. That way, if I was wrong, it wouldn't be my fault alone. That would be better than being revealed as wrong and taking all the blame. Just as I was about to agree with their viewpoint, I felt a little uneasy. I thought that since things weren't clear yet, I couldn't just casually accept someone else's opinion. If Nicole wasn't an antichrist, and I blindly followed others in classifying her, I would be arbitrarily condemning someone, which is something that would offend God. Such a transgression can never be erased once it has been made. Pricked by my conscience, I chose not to go along with Alina.

After that, I sought the truth about how to discern antichrists. In God's word I read: **"A person who has only the disposition of an antichrist cannot be classified as being, in essence, an antichrist. Only those who have the nature essence of antichrists are genuine antichrists. To be sure, there are differences in the humanity of the two, and under the governance of different sorts of humanity, the attitudes those people harbor toward the truth are likewise not the same—and when the attitudes that people harbor toward the truth are not the same, the roads they choose are different; and when the roads people choose are different, the resulting principles and consequences of their actions also have their differences. Because a person with only the disposition of an antichrist has a conscience at work, and has reason and a sense of honor, and, relatively speaking, loves the truth, when they reveal their corrupt disposition, there is reproof for it in their heart. At such times, they can reflect on themselves and know themselves, and they can**



**admit to their corrupt disposition and their revelation of corruption, thus enabling them to rebel against the flesh and their corrupt disposition, and come to practice the truth and submit to God. With an antichrist, however, this is not the case. Because they have no conscience at work or conscientious awareness, and less still do they have a sense of honor, when they reveal their corrupt disposition, they do not measure according to God's words whether their revelation is right or wrong, or whether theirs is a corrupt disposition or a normal humanity, or whether it accords with the truth. They never reflect on these things. So, how do they behave? They invariably maintain that the corrupt disposition they reveal and the road they choose are the right ones. They think whatever they do is right, that whatever they say is right; they are bent on holding to their own views. And so, however great a wrong they may do, however severe the corrupt disposition they may reveal, they will not recognize the gravity of the matter, and they certainly will not understand the corrupt disposition they have revealed. Neither, of course, will they put their desires aside, rebel against their ambition or their corrupt disposition in favor of choosing such a path as that of submission to God and the truth. One can see from these two different outcomes that if a person with an antichrist's disposition loves the truth in their heart, they have a chance to attain an understanding of it and to practice it, and to attain salvation, whereas the sort of person with the essence of an antichrist cannot understand the truth or put it into practice, nor can they attain salvation. That is the difference between the two"** (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Excursus Five: Summarizing the Character of Antichrists and Their Disposition Essence (Part Two)). **"Some leaders and workers have, in the past, often revealed an antichrist's dispositions: They were wanton and arbitrary, and it**

was always their way or the highway. But they didn't commit any obvious evils and their humanity was not terrible. Through being pruned, through brothers and sisters helping them, through being transferred or replaced, by being negative for a time, they finally become aware that what they revealed before were corrupt dispositions, they become willing to repent, and think, 'What is most important is to persist in doing my duty, no matter what. Though I was walking the path of an antichrist, I wasn't classed as one. This is God's mercy, so I must work hard in my belief and my pursuit. There's nothing wrong with the path of pursuing the truth.' Bit by bit, they turn themselves around, and then they repent. There are good manifestations in them, they are able to seek the truth principles when doing their duty, and they seek the truth principles when engaging with others, too. In every regard, they are entering in a positive direction. Have they not then changed? They have turned from walking the path of antichrists to walking the path of practicing and pursuing the truth. There is hope and a chance for them to attain salvation. Can you class such people as antichrists because they once exhibited some manifestations of an antichrist or walked the path of antichrists? No. Antichrists would rather die than repent. They have no sense of shame; besides that, they are vicious and wicked of disposition, and they are averse to the truth in the extreme. Can someone who is so averse to the truth put it into practice, or repent? That would be impossible. That they are so absolutely averse to the truth means that they will never repent" (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Eight: They Would Have Others Submit Only to Them, Not the Truth or God (Part One)). Genuine antichrists have a ferocious disposition, a malicious nature, and are evil people. They lack conscience and reason and shame, and no matter how much evil they do, or how much

harm they cause to the work of the church or the life entry of the brothers and sisters, they have no sense of conscience. Furthermore, they are deeply averse to and detest the truth. They never accept the least truth, and never admit their mistakes or repent, no matter how much evil they do. But people with antichrist dispositions don't have evil natures; they are not essentially evil people. They do, sometimes, exhibit antichrist behavior, such as being wayward and reckless, acting in a domineering way and excluding those who disagree with them, but through pruning, dismissal or adjustment, they can seek the truth and reflect on themselves, feel remorse for their wicked deeds, and afterward, genuinely repent and change. Just like some false leaders who, by means of self-reflection after several dismissals, are ultimately able to walk the path of pursuing the truth. It's quite possible to wrong someone by classifying them as an antichrist when some of their behavior resembles that of an antichrist. After that, I reread what Alina and the others had collected on Nicole's behavior, and I found it was mostly behavior that revealed corruption, such as an arrogant disposition, despising others, acting willfully, adjusting people without consulting co-workers, and so on. She also roped in other brothers and sisters to judge her partner, which disrupted church life. This was indeed an evil deed, but not something that she did habitually. In the past, she had never oppressed or judged others. After her dismissal, she was able to reflect on and recognize her transgressions and corrupt disposition, and she loathed herself and repented. It can be seen from this that she was not someone who refused the truth or who would never repent. Looking at it this way, she had some antichrist behavior but was not essentially an antichrist. To classify her as an antichrist because of such transgressions would have been disproportionate, and out of line with the truth principles. It would have been oppressing and condemning her, which was an evil thing to do.

Later, the upper leaders fellowshiped with us on the difference between corrupt behavior and nature essence. I thought, “Now Alina should understand, and won’t keep going on about this matter anymore.” Unexpectedly, after the meeting Alina said to us, “The upper leaders are shielding Nicole. They don’t look at the problem according to the essence of Nicole’s behavior. I don’t know if they are shielding her because she has some caliber.” I thought, “How come Alina is seizing on one transgression of Nicole and not letting go? Didn’t the leaders fellowship very clearly? Nicole’s behavior was just showing corruption. It was a temporary transgression. She really can’t be classified as an antichrist.” But Alina and the others wouldn’t accept this and said they would go higher up if the leaders wouldn’t handle Nicole. Alina’s attitude was so stubborn, and the other two partners were also on her side. I was the only one who disagreed with her. I was very troubled. If I continued to approve of how the leaders handled things, would Alina and the others say I worshiped status, lacked discernment, and would say whatever the leaders said? But if I agreed with their point of view, wouldn’t this be randomly condemning someone? Perhaps I should say I didn’t know how to discern. That way, they wouldn’t know my actual views, and wouldn’t say I lacked discernment or stood on the side of an antichrist. So, I said very hesitantly, “I don’t know enough about Nicole’s behavior, so I don’t know how to classify her.” Alina’s expression changed immediately when she saw that I didn’t go along with her. Afterward, they deliberately avoided me when they were discussing informing on Nicole. I felt like I was being isolated, which left a bad taste, “Did I do something wrong? Why are they treating me like this?” This was disturbing for me, and I was unsettled in doing my duty. I suspected that behind my back they would say I understood the truth too shallowly and lacked discernment. Would they continue to exclude me from now on? I felt

even more despondent, and I thought, “All right, if they won’t listen to my suggestions and don’t want me involved, then I’ll save myself a lot of trouble and avoid offending them so they don’t make an accusation and have me dismissed. Let them do whatever they want; it’s none of my business anyway.” But after I made that choice, I reproached myself: “Aren’t I running away? I’m not upholding the work of the church.” Later, I opened up and fellowshiped about my state with the leaders, and they reminded me to seek God’s intention and uphold the work of the church, adding that if I became negative and backed off or thought of running away because Alina and the others were isolating me, I would be shirking my responsibility. Hearing what the leaders said, I realized I was only considering my own personal interests. I saw that one of God’s chosen people was being oppressed, but I was acting like this was not my concern. I even wanted to run away to avoid being excluded. I was so selfish and despicable!

Later, I read a passage of God’s words, and only then did I see my nature essence a little more clearly. God says: **“When people take no responsibility toward their duties, do them in a perfunctory manner, act like people pleasers, and do not defend the interests of the house of God, what disposition is this? This is cunningness, it is the disposition of Satan. The most prominent aspect of man’s philosophies for worldly dealings is cunningness. People think that if they are not cunning, they will be liable to offend others and unable to protect themselves; they think that they must be cunning enough not to hurt or offend anyone, thereby keeping themselves safe, protecting their livelihoods, and gaining a firm foothold among other people. Nonbelievers all live by Satan’s philosophies. They are all people pleasers and do not offend anyone. You have come to the house of God, read the word of God, and**

listened to the sermons of God's house, so why are you unable to practice the truth, speak from the heart, and be an honest person? Why are you always a people pleaser? People pleasers only protect their own interests, and not the interests of the church. When they see someone do evil and harm the church's interests, they ignore it. They like to be people pleasers, and do not offend anyone. This is irresponsible, and that kind of person is too cunning and untrustworthy. To protect their own vanity and pride, and to maintain their reputation and status, some people are happy to help others, and to sacrifice for their friends no matter the cost. But when they need to protect the interests of the house of God, the truth, and justice, their good intentions are gone, they have completely disappeared. When they should practice the truth, they do not practice it at all. What is going on? To protect their own dignity and pride, they will pay any price and endure any suffering. But when they need to do real work and handle practical affairs, to safeguard the church's work and positive things, and to protect and provide for God's chosen people, why do they no longer have the strength to pay any price and endure any suffering? That is inconceivable. Actually, they have a kind of disposition that is averse to the truth. Why do I say that their disposition is averse to the truth? Because whenever something involves bearing witness for God, practicing the truth, protecting God's chosen people, fighting against Satan's schemes, or protecting the work of the church, they flee and hide, and don't attend to any proper matters. Where is their heroism and spirit to endure suffering? Where do they apply these things? This is easy to see. Even if someone reproves them, saying that they should not be so selfish and base, and protect themselves, and that they ought to protect the work of the church, they don't really care. They say to

**themselves, ‘I don’t do those things, and they do not have anything to do with me. What good would acting like that be for my pursuit of fame, gain, and status?’ They are not a person who pursues the truth. They only like to seek fame, gain, and status, and they do not do the work that God has entrusted to them at all. So, when they are needed to do the work of the church, they simply choose to flee. This means that, in their hearts, they do not like positive things, and are not interested in the truth. This is a clear manifestation of being averse to the truth. Only those who love the truth and possess the truth reality can come forward when required by the work of God’s house and by God’s chosen ones, only they can stand up, bravely and duty-bound, to testify to God and fellowship the truth, leading God’s chosen ones onto the right path, enabling them to attain submission to God’s work. Only this is an attitude of responsibility and a manifestation of showing consideration for God’s intentions”** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the

Last Days. Part Three). It was only by comparison with God’s words that I saw I was especially cunning and deceitful. Alina and the others wanted to classify Nicole as an antichrist. I obviously didn’t agree with them, and I also knew they were treating Nicole unjustly by arbitrarily condemning her, but I was worried about offending them and being condemned or dismissed by them. To protect my status and reputation, I avoided voicing what I really thought and said something ambiguous. I didn’t have the courage to stick to the correct point of view. I always considered my own interests and put self-preservation first, and did absolutely nothing to protect the interests of the church. Nor did I consider how much trouble they would bring to the work of the church by doing this. In a major matter involving the church’s work and the life entry of the brothers and sisters, I feigned ignorance so that no one was offended or hurt, and to keep my position I went with the

flow and spoke against principles. I really was too cunning. I was not only cunning, but I was averse to the truth. I understood that practicing the truth and protecting the work of the church is a just and positive thing, but when I thought my own interests might be damaged, I didn't practice it. I even thought I might suffer for defending what is right. Didn't this just show that I disliked positive things and was averse to the truth? I felt very remorseful and guilty.

After that, the upper leaders reminded me that after Nicole had been dismissed this time, Alina had continued reporting her as an antichrist, and wouldn't stop until Nicole was expelled. This was no longer an ordinary manifestation of corruption. If Alina's intention really was to discern an antichrist and protect the work of the church, but simply wasn't discerning accurately, then, after the leaders had fellowshiped in accordance with the truth principles, she would have been able to see her mistakes and treat Nicole's transgression correctly. But she didn't accept the fellowship at all, stuck to her guns and wouldn't let go, which smacked of oppressing and punishing someone. The leaders asked me to investigate Alina and find out the truth of the matter, and I agreed. But when I was going to ask others about it, I started to back off again. "Now it's not just Rachel who doesn't discern Alina. Even some of the brothers and sisters in the church are taking her side. If I try to find out the truth of the matter in private, and they tell Alina about this, would Alina and the others have me dismissed?" When I thought about this, I started to feel conflicted again. Later, I remembered God's words: **"All of you say you are considerate of God's burden and will defend the testimony of the church, but who among you has really been considerate of God's burden? Ask yourself: Are you someone who has shown consideration for His burden? Can you practice righteousness for Him? Can you stand up and speak for Me? Can you**



**steadfastly put the truth into practice? Are you bold enough to fight against all of Satan's deeds? Would you be able to set your feelings aside and expose Satan for the sake of My truth? Can you allow My intentions to be satisfied in you? Have you offered up your heart in the most crucial of moments? Are you someone who follows My will? Ask yourself these questions, and think about them often"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The

Appearance and Work of God. Utterances of Christ in the Beginning, Chapter 13). God's words stirred my heart. In the face of God's questions, I saw I was being timid and cowardly, frightened of trouble. I always wanted to run away from trouble. I wasn't considerate of God's burden at all. I didn't protect the work of the church for fear that doing so would offend others and be to my detriment. I was so selfish and despicable! God's words awakened me. Now Alina's behavior was disrupting church life. If I didn't stand up now, it would be too late when Alina caused even greater harm to the work of the church. My timidity and fear were a lack of faith in God. I didn't believe everything was in God's hands, so I always feared being oppressed by others. God is righteous, the truth rules in God's house. In the end negative people and evil people cannot find a footing here, but my faith was too small. So, I came before God and prayed, "God, I have fear and timidity in my heart. Please give me the faith to stand up and safeguard the work of the church." After I prayed, I thought of a group leader who was upright and had some discernment. So I sought him out and asked him to work with me in investigating the matter. On checking Alina's reports about antichrist behaviors by Nicole, we were aghast. We found that some of the accusations were untrue, and others concerned behaviors which simply revealed corruption and were not substantive problems. By condemning Nicole as an antichrist on the basis of such behaviors, wasn't Alina twisting the facts to oppress Nicole? The deacon of general affairs had also seen that

Alina was being unrelenting toward Nicole, and had warned her not to do evil, but Alina remained unmoved and was still clamoring to condemn Nicole as an antichrist. We saw that Alina had a particular hatred of Nicole and was determined to have her expelled. We learned about the situation when Alina and Nicole were partners, and discovered that the upper leaders had given a lot of important work to Nicole at that time because her caliber and work ability were superior to those of Alina. Alina thought Nicole was stealing her limelight, and was jealous and dissatisfied as a result. Also, Nicole often pointed out problems in her work, so Alina felt that Nicole despised her. Alina held a grudge against Nicole and was always looking for a chance to get her own back. On this occasion, when Nicole violated principles and was shown to be a false leader, Alina wanted to take the opportunity to classify Nicole as an antichrist and expel her. At first, I thought she condemned Nicole because she didn't understand the truth. Now, I saw that Alina's desire for revenge was so strong that in order to settle her personal score, she distorted the facts to mislead others into joining her in condemnation of Nicole. It was utterly abominable in nature!

One day, through the revelation in God's word, I saw Alina's essence rather more clearly. God says: **“What is a dissenter? Who are the people an antichrist views as dissenters? At a minimum, they are those who do not take the antichrist seriously as a leader, meaning that they do not look up to them or worship them but treat them as an ordinary person. That is one sort. Then there are those who love the truth, pursue the truth, pursue a change in their disposition, and pursue the love for God; they take a different road from that of an antichrist, and they are dissenters in the antichrist's eyes. Are there any others? (Those who always make suggestions to antichrists, and who dare to expose them.) Any who dare offer an antichrist their suggestions and expose them, or**

whose views are different from theirs, are seen by them as dissenters. And there is another sort: those who equal the antichrist in caliber and ability, whose capacity for speech and action is similar to theirs, or whom they see as above them and able to discern them. To an antichrist, this is beyond the pale, a threat to their status. Such people are the antichrist's greatest dissenters. The antichrist does not dare neglect such people or slacken in the least. They consider them as thorns in their side, a constant irritation, are vigilant and guarded against them at all times, and avoid them in everything they do. Especially when the antichrist sees that a dissenter is going to discern and expose them, a special panic grips them; they are desperate to exclude and attack such a dissenter, such that they will not be satisfied until they have cleared that dissenter out of the church. ... For an antichrist, the dissenter is a threat to their status and power. Whoever threatens their status and power, no matter who it may be, antichrists will go to any lengths to 'take care' of them. If these people truly cannot be brought to heel or recruited, then the antichrists will bring them down or clear them out. In the end, the antichrists will achieve their goal of having absolute power, and being a law unto themselves. This is one of the techniques that antichrists habitually use to maintain their status and power—they attack and exclude dissenters” (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Two: They Attack and Exclude Dissenters). **“When a vicious person is faced with any kind of well-intentioned exhortation, accusation, teaching or help, their attitude is not to be grateful or accept it humbly, but instead to become enraged from shame, and to feel extreme hostility, hatred, and to even retaliate. ... Of course, when they retaliate against another because of hatred, it is not because they have hatred toward or an old grudge against that person, but because**

**that person has exposed their mistakes. This shows that the mere act of exposing an antichrist, regardless of who does so, and regardless of their relationship with the antichrist, can trigger their hatred and instigate their revenge. Regardless of who it is, whether they understand the truth, or whether they are a leader or worker or an ordinary member of God's chosen people, as long as anyone exposes and prunes the antichrist, they will treat that person as an enemy. They will even openly say, 'I'll go hard on whoever prunes me. Whoever prunes me, exposes the skeletons in my closet, gets me expelled by the house of god, or robs me of my share of blessings, I'll never leave them be. That's how I am in the secular world: No one dares give me trouble. The person who dares to bother me hasn't been born yet!' These are the type of ruthless words antichrists let out when they face being pruned. When they let out these ruthless words, it isn't to intimidate others, nor are they venting to protect themselves. They are truly capable of doing evil, and they will stoop to any means available to them. This is the vicious disposition of antichrists"** (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Nine (Part Eight)). It was only through the revelation of God's word that I clearly saw Alina's motives. She kept on saying she wanted to safeguard the work of the church and could not let any antichrist go, when in reality she was waging a personal vendetta. Merely because Nicole had pointed out errors in her work, she bore a grudge. She made use of Nicole's dismissal to make a big fuss, and seized on Nicole's passing transgression to classify her as an antichrist. After our leaders fellowshiped clearly on the difference between corruption and evildoing, she wouldn't let it go, and continued doing everything she could to present slanted information about Nicole. She made inflated accusations and misled brothers and sisters into joining her condemnation of Nicole, as part of her effort to remove those

who held different views. When the leaders didn't handle Nicole as she wanted, she became dissatisfied and told co-workers that the leaders were shielding Nicole, which misled them into taking her side and prejudiced them against the leaders. When I put forward a different view on Nicole's affairs, she excluded and isolated me. When some brothers and sisters alerted her to what she was doing, she refused to accept it and said this was disruption by Satan. From these facts, we can see that Alina hated the truth and had a very vicious disposition. If anyone discerned her or posed a threat to her status, she treated them as an enemy to be attacked, excluded and punished in retaliation. Alina was an evil person. After that, I reported the facts I had learned to the leaders. They then dismissed Alina, isolated her, and monitored her behavior so that if she caused further disruption she would be expelled. Through fellowship, Rachel also gained discernment of Alina. When she saw that she had gone along with Alina in doing evil, she was full of remorse and hated herself.

Although this happened a long time ago, I am ashamed to think about how, for the duration, and in my own self-interest, I hadn't cared at all if the work of the church suffered. But for the enlightenment and guidance of the words of God, I wouldn't even have had the courage to safeguard the work of the church. It was God's word that gave me the principles of practice. No matter how much I understand the truth, so long as the interests of the church are involved, I have to stand up in their defense. This is an unwavering responsibility.

## **43. I Believe in God: Why Worship People?**

By Lorraine, South Korea

When I was first put in charge of the gospel work in the church, I wasn't getting great results, and this made me feel incredibly anxious. Around that time, Annie was transferred over to our church. I heard that she'd been a believer for over 20 years, that she had forsaken everything to work and expend herself, preached in many different places, and experienced great danger and adversity without ever giving up. Because of this, I held her in high esteem, and when my leader arranged for Annie to partner up with me on the gospel work, I was thrilled. During her first gathering with us, Annie talked about the encounters she'd had with disruptive religious leaders while sharing the gospel, and how she'd fellowshipped and debated with them, leaving them speechless. She spoke about how she'd fellowshipped on the truth to potential gospel recipients who had strong religious notions and extensive biblical knowledge, and ultimately resolved their confusions. She discussed the many difficulties she'd faced while spreading the gospel, and how she and the other brothers and sisters had paid a price to spread the gospel to different places. She also spoke about how the upper leaders had valued and cultivated her and given her some important duties. What impressed me most was when she fellowshipped about God's love for mankind, her eyes welling up with tears. She said that we must be considerate of God's intentions, and that no matter how many hardships we face, it is our mission to spread His gospel of the last days. At the time, it seemed to me that Annie was full of love for God, and I immediately developed respect for her. I thought, "Annie has believed in God for a long time, she understands more truths than we do, and she is of greater stature than us. I should learn from her." Later, while

we were performing our duties together, I noticed that Annie was really able to withstand hardship, often staying up late to follow up on work and solve problems. She also pointed out deviations and oversights in my work, and fellowshiped with me about paths of practice. When sharing the gospel with potential recipients, she gave examples, used metaphors, spoke very incisively, and was able to resolve the confusions they had. When she talked about how she'd failed to do her duty well during gatherings, she would often begin to cry, saying how much she owed God. Sometimes, the waterers would come to her with a problem that needed resolving, and she'd immediately find time to help them out. She was also really caring if she noticed that I wasn't feeling well physically. All of this just made me like her even more. Later on, when she was elected as a church leader, I felt even more certain that she understood the truth and possessed reality. I looked up to her even more and held her in even higher esteem. I saw how busy she was, rushing around to help the brothers and sisters resolve their problems, and this made me feel that she had a really important role in the church, and that we definitely couldn't do without her. When I ran into problems or difficulties, I'd seek her out for fellowship. I'd eagerly make notes on her views and ideas, and implement her suggestions. I even imitated some of her behaviors. For example, when I saw her working late into the night, I took it as a sign of being faithful and able to bear hardship in doing a duty, and I would stay up late too. Even when I had nothing urgent to do and could have gone to bed earlier, if I saw that Annie still hadn't turned in for the night, I would want to stay up as well. When I saw that she stayed strong and continued to busy herself with her duty after being pruned, I thought that this meant that she had stature and reality. So after I was pruned, even though I actually felt really upset and wanted to take some time to reflect, when I thought about Annie's behavior, I'd rush

back to my duty without focusing on reflecting and gaining knowledge of myself. I was completely unaware that I was living in a state of esteeming and worshiping a person. I stayed this way until some things happened that gradually gave me some discernment of Annie.

Annie took a hands-on approach to everything as a church leader, and was really able to suffer and pay a price, but problems still kept popping up one after another, and the effectiveness of the church's work slowly declined. One day, the watering deacon, Sister Laila, told me that she'd found some deviations in Annie's work. She said that Annie was taking charge of everything and not allowing the brothers and sisters to practice, and that she wasn't focused on cultivating others. Laila said that Annie was doing all the work of the deacons and the team leaders, which meant that nobody else could practice, and that over time, everyone had begun to feel useless and worthless, but really looked up to Annie. This was not an atmosphere conducive to doing one's duty. Laila said that she wanted to give Annie some advice, and tell her to provide the others with more chances to practice, so that they could learn about their deficiencies and shortcomings and make faster progress. That way everyone would be able to make use of their talents, and they would surely become more and more effective in their duties. I was really supportive of Laila's idea, so I went with her to talk to Annie. I was surprised to find that Annie was really unhappy with our advice, and just frowned and disagreed with us. She said that the brothers and sisters had too many shortcomings, that teaching them would be a lot of trouble and would just delay things. She said that it was more effective and efficient for her to just do things herself. Hearing her assert this so eloquently, I felt a little confused. But when I thought about it later, I realized that it was inappropriate for Annie to work in that way. The others wouldn't get any training, and if everything was left up to her, the



work still wouldn't be done well. But then I thought about how we didn't understand the truth, so we'd just be useless and hold things up if we tried to work with her to solve problems. Since Annie understood the truth better, I thought that we should just let her take care of things. As a result, even though Annie was really busy every day, a lot of problems still remained. The brothers and sisters were very passive in their duties and would wait for her to fix problems. Most people were living in a repressed and despondent state. Later, an upper leader found out that there were many problems in our church, so she collected assessments of Annie from the brothers and sisters, and learned about how arrogant, conceited, controlling, and dismissive of suggestions Annie was, and how she would always exalt herself, show off, and bring everyone before her. Upon discovering this, the leader promptly dismissed her. She also pointed out that we lacked discernment, and had been blindly looking up to and worshiping Annie. She fellowshipped on how we should seek the truth principles in our duties, and not look up to or obey other people. Hearing this, I realized that I'd been living in a protracted state of worshiping a person, and that my relationship with God hadn't been normal for a long time. I thought of how **"The Ten Administrative Decrees That Must Be Obeyed by God's Chosen People in the Age of Kingdom"** said: **"People who believe in God should submit to God and worship Him. Do not exalt or look up to any person; do not put God first, the people you look up to second, and yourself third. No person should hold a place in your heart, and you should not consider people—particularly those you venerate—to be on a par with God or to be His equal. This is intolerable to God"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God). I felt a little afraid. I thought about how I had held Annie in high esteem ever since meeting her, and how I hadn't been focusing on seeking the truth principles in my duty, and just relying on her instead. I

would seek her out whenever I had a problem and do whatever she said. I had really looked up to her and I hadn't kept a place in my heart for God. It had seemed to me that our work couldn't get done without her in the church, as if we could get along fine without God's guidance or the truth principles. Was I even a believer? Was I not just worshiping and following another person? Such behavior is truly disgusting to God! It was no wonder that I couldn't obtain the Holy Spirit's work in my duty, and hadn't seen any progress after practicing for such a long time. I prayed to God, wanting to change my state and stop looking up to other people.

After that, some things happened that showed me the real Annie. After she was dismissed, despite knowing full well that many brothers and sisters venerated her, she still wouldn't dissect or try to know herself during gatherings. Instead, she acted like she had been wronged, saying that she venerated her partner, Sister Vera, and that when she performed her duty, she just did everything that Vera told her to. I was shocked to see her passing the blame onto Vera, and thought, "The leader clearly exposed and dissected Annie's problems, so why does she have no self-understanding and take no responsibility? That is not a manifestation of accepting the truth!" Later, the leader re-assigned Annie to do gospel work with me, and even though I didn't hold her in such high esteem as before, I was still really happy. There's a saying that goes, "A weakened bear is still stronger than a deer," and I felt like Annie was still much better than me, despite all of her problems. Yet, while working with her, I found that she wasn't as easygoing or approachable as before and had instead become very intense. When we were discussing work, she wouldn't listen to any of my views and often just rejected them outright. Many times, she avoided talking to me, and instead went to discuss things with the sister she had been partnered with before. This made me feel constrained and rejected. At the time, we

weren't achieving any results in our duty, so I went to fellowship with her about the problems I'd discovered during our time working together. I was shocked to find that she wouldn't accept any of them, and that she felt that she didn't have any problems. She was blunt in her response to me, saying, "I'll be frank with you, so don't get upset. I'm not used to working with you. I don't like the way you work, and it's making me impatient." Hearing this made me feel even more negative, and I felt like I was holding her back.

Later on, the leader heard about our problems and pruned Annie for being arrogant, self-righteous, and not accepting the truth. During a gathering, Annie said to everyone that her being pruned was God's love. She cried, acknowledging that she had let God down by not doing her duty well. She seemed so sincere, like she really knew herself. And yet, in our private interactions, she just spread negativity, saying that she was done, and she simply had no desire to do her duty. I tried fellowshipping with her, but she wouldn't listen. When the leader talked about the progress a certain brother or sister was making, and how well they were doing in their duty, Annie would become even more negative, thinking that the leader valued others more than her. She was always asking me if the others laughed at her behind her back. She was clearly feeling negative and falling apart physically and mentally, but she acted so great and strong at gatherings, and would put on an act of accepting the truth and considering God's intentions. Just looking at her made me feel exhausted. Sometimes I'd ask myself, "Is this really the person I used to esteem and venerate so much? She doesn't seem like someone who possesses the truth reality!" I realized that she was so focused on prestige and status, and that she didn't accept the truth at all. When things befell her, she didn't try to know herself, and often just put on an act. She was not a right person. Later on, her state kept deteriorating.

The leader fellowshiped with her quite a few times, and while she appeared to accept it, she didn't actually change at all. She even hated the brothers and sisters and looked at them with venom in her eyes. When the leader pruned and exposed her problems, she hated and blamed God. She couldn't stop herself from pushing responsibility for everything bad that happened onto God's shoulders. I saw that she had a vicious nature, and that she hated God and the truth. She was a demon, an antichrist. Later on, she was no longer allowed to live a church life or perform a duty.

I wasn't able to feel calm for quite a while after Annie left. I wondered why I had worshiped and esteemed her so much, to the point of even wanting to be like her. I thought about how I had always admired people who were eloquent, who were able to withstand great suffering and forsake everything to expend themselves for God, and people who had been arrested and tortured without betraying God. Why did I worship and esteem these people so much? What idea was I being ruled by? Then, one day, I saw two passages of God's words that said: **"Some people are able to bear hardships, can pay the price, are outwardly very well-behaved, are quite well-respected, and enjoy the admiration of others. Would you say that this kind of outward behavior can be regarded as putting the truth into practice? Could one determine that such people are satisfying God's intentions? Why is it that time and time again people see such individuals and think that they are satisfying God, walking the path of putting the truth into practice, and following God's way? Why do some people think this way? There is only one explanation for it. What explanation is that? It is that for a great many people, certain questions—such as what it means to put the truth into practice, what it means to satisfy God, and what it means to genuinely possess the truth reality—are not very clear. Thus, there are some people who are often**

**misled by those who outwardly seem spiritual, noble, lofty, and great. As for people who can speak eloquently of words and doctrines, and whose speech and actions seem worthy of admiration, those who are deceived by them have never looked at the essence of their actions, the principles behind their deeds, or what their goals are. Moreover, they have never looked at whether these people truly submit to God, nor have they ever determined whether or not these people genuinely fear God and shun evil. They have never discerned the humanity essence of these people. Rather, beginning with the first step of getting acquainted with them, they have, little by little, come to admire and venerate these people, and in the end, these people become their idols. Furthermore, in some people's minds, the idols whom they worship—and who they believe can abandon their families and jobs, and who seem superficially able to pay the price—are the ones who are truly satisfying God and who can really attain good outcomes and good destinations. In their minds, these idols are the ones whom God praises” (The Word, Vol. 2. On Knowing God. How to Know God's Disposition and the Results His Work Shall Achieve). “There is only one root cause which makes people have such ignorant actions and viewpoints, or one-sided opinions and practices—and today I will tell you about it: The reason is that, although people may follow God, pray to Him every day, and read His utterances every day, they do not actually understand His intentions. Herein lies the root of the problem. If someone understood God's heart and knew what He likes, what He loathes, what He wants, what He rejects, what kind of person He loves, what kind of person He dislikes, what kind of standard He uses when making demands of people, and what kind of approach He takes for perfecting them, then could that person still have their own personal opinions? Could people like this simply go and worship someone else?**

**Could an ordinary human become their idol? People who understand God's intentions possess a slightly more rational viewpoint than that. They are not going to arbitrarily idolize a corrupted person, nor will they, while walking the path of putting the truth into practice, believe that blindly adhering to a few simple rules or principles is tantamount to putting the truth into practice"** (The Word, Vol. 2. On Knowing God. How to Know

God's Disposition and the Results His Work Shall Achieve). God's words hit the nail on the head for my state. I realized that I'd had the wrong perspective in my faith over all those years, thinking that if someone had believed in God for a long time, if they enthusiastically expended themselves, suffered and paid a price, and did a lot of work, this meant that they practiced the truth and had the truth reality, and that they were the kind of people that pleased God and had a place in the church. So, when I saw that Annie had been a believer for many years, that she had made many sacrifices and suffered a lot to spread the gospel, and that she was clear and logical in her preaching and fellowship, I was misled by her grand image and good behavior, and began to hold her in high esteem and worship her. It was only after reading those passages of God's word that I saw how foolish and unaware I was, and what an absurd idea I'd been clinging to. When a person makes sacrifices and expends themselves, when they suffer and pay a price in their duty, those are just superficial good behaviors. It doesn't mean that they have good humanity or that they love the truth, and it certainly doesn't mean that they have the truth reality. Though Annie was a talented speaker and had been constantly forsaking and expending herself in the 20 years that she'd been a believer, she treated these things as personal capital, and always used it to show off, flaunt herself, and bring people before her. She wasn't able to accept or practice the truth at all. No matter how many times she was pruned, or how many failures or missteps she made, she never reflected to

know herself, and she definitely didn't truly repent. When she was valued by others and possessed high status, she had lots of energy for her duty, and could stay up late and pour everything into it. But after she was dismissed, she lost all desire to do her duty, and was resistant and resentful. In private, she spread negativity, but on the surface, she said that she owed God and seemed really repentant. This made other people feel that she was considerate of God's intentions, that she had stature and possessed reality, so they all esteemed and worshiped her. After she was pruned, she told everyone that it was God's love, but secretly she blamed and hated God. Was she not an antichrist who hated the truth and God? I finally understood that just because someone has believed in God for a long time, and is able to make sacrifices and speak eloquently, has experience, and is valued by others, that doesn't mean that they have the truth reality, and it certainly doesn't mean that they please God. No matter how long someone has believed or how hard they've worked, if they don't practice the truth at all and haven't changed their satanic disposition, they are still a person who resists God in their essence, and they will ultimately be exposed and eliminated. This fulfills the words of the Lord Jesus: **"Many will say to Me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, and in Your name have cast out devils, and in Your name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess to them, I never knew you: depart from Me, you that work iniquity"** (Matthew 7:22–23). Later, I thought of God's words: **"I do not care how meritorious your hard work is, how impressive your qualifications, how closely you follow Me, how renowned you are, or how much you have improved your attitude; as long as you have not met My demands, you will never be able to win My praise. Write off all those ideas and calculations of yours as soon as possible, and start treating My requirements seriously; otherwise, I will**

**turn everyone to ash in order to bring an end to My work and, at worst turn My years of work and suffering into nothing, for I cannot bring My enemies and those people who reek of evil and have Satan's appearance into My kingdom or take them into the next age"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Transgressions Will Lead Man to Hell). **"I decide the destination of each person not on the basis of age, seniority, amount of suffering, and least of all, the degree to which they invite pity, but according to whether they possess the truth. There is no other choice but this. You must realize that all those who do not follow the will of God shall also be punished. This is an immutable fact"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Prepare Sufficient Good Deeds for Your Destination). God's words really touched my heart. God doesn't determine someone's outcome or destination according to how much they've toiled and contributed, how well they've behaved, or how much work they've done, He bases it on whether or not they have the truth. God doesn't judge people by what's on the surface, He judges them by their essence. He looks at whether they love the truth and can put it into practice, whether they submit to Him and follow His will. I realized that God really does have a righteous, holy disposition. There are standards by which He judges people, and principles to how He treats people, without the slightest interference of fleshly feelings. God won't determine that someone is righteous or good just because they show a bit of enthusiasm, or if they contribute or suffer a little. On the contrary, regardless of how long someone has believed in God, how much work they've done, or how good their reputation is, they'll eventually be eliminated by God if they don't practice the truth and change their corrupt disposition. After I understood this, I felt even more ignorant and pathetic. In all my years of faith, I hadn't pursued the truth or understood God's intentions. I had just based my belief on my own notions and imaginings,



and constantly worshiped other people. I was so blind and ignorant! I thought of God's word: **"In all of humanity, there is no one who can serve as a model for others, because all men are basically alike and are no different from each other, with little to distinguish them one from another. For this reason, even today men are still unable to know My works fully. Only when My chastisement descends on all mankind will they, unbeknownst to themselves, become aware of My works, and without My doing anything or compelling anyone, man will come to know Me, and thereby witness My works. This is My plan, it is the aspect of My works that is made manifest, and it is what man should know"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. God's Words to the Entire Universe, Chapter 26). God's word is perfectly clear. People are corrupted by Satan and have Satan's essence. We reveal nothing but satanic dispositions. Not a single one of us is worthy of worship. If I had understood that before, I would never have worshiped or idolized a person.

Soon after that, I was dismissed for not having achieved anything in my duty for a long time. At the time, I did a lot of thinking and reflected on why I had failed. I thought back on how I'd been stuck in a state of worshiping and looking up to Annie, and how I had believed that she understood the truth and possessed reality just because she'd been a believer for a long time, preached the gospel for years, suffered greatly, and had a lot of work experience. I had often imitated her behavior and gone to her with my problems. I would accept whatever views she expressed immediately, without giving them any thought, and just do whatever she said. I hadn't kept a place in my heart for God at all. I hadn't sought the truth when I encountered problems, and there hadn't been any principles to my actions. I had just been listening to a person—to Annie. How was that believing in God? Hadn't I just been following a person? It's just like God

**says: “What you admire is not the humility of Christ, but those false shepherds of prominent standing. You do not adore the loveliness or wisdom of Christ, but those libertines who wallow in the filth of the world. You laugh at the pain of Christ who has no place to lay His head, but you admire those corpses that hunt for offerings and live in debauchery. You are not willing to suffer alongside Christ, but you gladly throw yourself into the arms of those reckless antichrists, though they only supply you with flesh, words, and control. Even now, your heart still turns toward them, toward their reputation, toward their status, toward their influence. And yet you continue to hold an attitude of finding the work of Christ hard to swallow and being unwilling to accept it. This is why I say that you lack the faith to acknowledge Christ. The reason you have followed Him to this day is only because you had no other option. A series of lofty images are forever towering in your heart; you cannot forget their every word and deed, nor their influential words and hands. They are, in your heart, forever supreme and forever heroes. But this is not so for the Christ of today. He is forever insignificant in your heart, and forever undeserving of fear. For He is far too ordinary, has far too little influence, and is far from lofty”**

(The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Are You a True Believer in God?). God’s words revealed my true state. When I thought back on my years of faith, I saw that the people I’d admired all possessed caliber and gifts, and were supported and valued by others, and that I’d looked upon every one of their words and deeds as something to emulate. I had never asked myself what God’s intention was, whether my actions were what God wanted, or if they were in line with the truth principles. I had just blindly worshiped and followed other people, and even hoped to become just like them. I had been on the wrong path the whole time, pursuing more suffering and work, and

relying on caliber and experience while performing my duty. I hadn't focused on seeking the truth principles and I had placed even less emphasis on my own life entry. As a result, I hadn't understood much of the truth over my years of faith, and my life had suffered. I realized how incredibly ignorant and pathetic I was. God has given us so many words, and I had hardly memorized any of them, but I could remember very clearly everything that Annie said, and all of the views that she expressed, and I would always hurry to carry them out. I had always relied on her in my duty, and I hadn't kept a place in my heart for God at all. This situation with Annie had thoroughly exposed me. Especially after her dismissal, when a lot of her problems had already been revealed and we began working together again, I still had this grand image of her in my mind. I continued to rely on her in my duty and kept thinking of that idiom, "A weakened bear is still stronger than a deer," believing that Annie was still better than me even if she had some problems. This was a purely satanic view. I had worshiped her too much, I hadn't sought the truth principles of in our interactions and I had completely lacked discernment. I had been constantly viewing things according to the devilish words of Satan. And later on, after more and more of Annie's problems had come to light, I still didn't discern or expose her. I just kept following her, being constrained by her, and living in a state of negativity and misery. I truly deserved everything that I got! I had been looking up to Annie and relying on her in my duty, but what had she ever given me? Misleading, constraint, and rejection. She had also made me feel miserable and repressed, without any hope of release, and I had grown further and further away from God. Though I believed in God, I hadn't depended on or looked up to Him, and I hadn't pursued the truth at all. I had just worshiped and followed people. I was an idiot without any discernment. To have failed and fallen like that was truly God's

righteousness and salvation. Through this revelation I was able to take a hard look at the wrong path that I was on, examine the absurd views that I harbored, and seek the truth to resolve my problems. At the same time, I also felt the importance of pursuing the truth. God said that **“Those who do not pursue the truth cannot follow until the very end”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. You Should Maintain Your Devotion to God), and this is so real. Those who don’t pursue the truth are doomed to be exposed and eliminated by God. The failures of the person I had looked up to—and my own failures too—were the best proof of this.

A couple of months later, I was paired with Sarah for gospel work. I heard that after coming to believe in God, she’d given up a great job in order to do her duty, and that she was really able to endure hardship, possessed great caliber, and had experience spreading the gospel. I’d known her for a while and seen that she cared a lot about the church’s work. She actively fellowshiped in gatherings, and no matter what the circumstances were or how many people were there, she never felt constrained, and she spoke with great poise and without fear. She would fellowship and help the brothers and sisters when they ran into problems, and everyone really approved of her. I felt like she was someone who pursued the truth, and held her in high esteem. And while I was happy to have the chance to work with her, I also remembered my previous failure, and how valuing others’ caliber and gifts had led me to worship and follow them. I had taken the wrong path because of this and it had been harmful to my life. I knew that I couldn’t view things through that kind of fallacious perspective when it came to my interactions with Sarah, and that I had to approach her in accordance with the truth principles. Sarah had good caliber and experience sharing the gospel, so I had a lot to learn from her to make up for what I lacked. But she was a corrupt person, too, with corrupt dispositions,

deficiencies, and shortcomings. I couldn't worship and rely on her. If she had problems or deviations in her duty, I couldn't just blindly follow her. I had to exercise discernment and treat her according to the truth principles. Later on, in our work discussions, I noticed that most of Sarah's suggestions weren't very practical. A couple of other sisters and I felt that they wouldn't work, but Sarah really insisted on them. Whenever she couldn't get an idea approved, we'd get stuck on it, and remain at an impasse for a long time, which really delayed the progress of our work. Gradually, I saw that Sarah was arrogant, self-righteous, and stubborn, and that she'd get upset when her suggestions weren't adopted. She'd lose her temper, and this was constraining for other people. She wasn't playing a positive role in our group, and she disrupted and obstructed the work's progress, so I reported her consistent behavior to the leader. After understanding the situation, the leader exposed and dissected Sarah's issues and tried to help her, but she refused to accept it, so the leader dismissed her. After experiencing that, I felt really at peace. I felt like I'd finally turned my fallacious ideas around and that I no longer worshiped and followed people like I had before. I was really grateful to God for setting up those situations to help me gain discernment and learn those lessons.

## 44. My Days in Captivity

By Yang Qing, China

In July 2006, I accepted Almighty God's work of the last days. My husband supported my belief in God, and he received brothers and sisters who came to our home warmly. Later he heard that believers in Almighty God could face oppression and arrest by the government, and he went to ask my cousin, who worked in a procuratorial office, about it. After he came home he said to me, "Your cousin says the government is cracking down on religious belief, especially believers in Almighty God. Also, one believer will implicate their entire family. Don't believe in Almighty God anymore. If you must believe, go to a Three-Self church." I could see that my husband didn't understand matters of faith. "The Three-Self Church was established by the Communist Party," I told him. "They put patriotism and love of Party first, then love of God. They see the Party as greater than God. That's not faith. I won't go to the Three-Self church." "I know it's good having faith in Almighty God," he said resignedly, "but you have to see the situation clearly. It's the Communist Party's world now, and if you keep your faith we might lose our jobs. Are you willing to give up your job at the hospital? What's more, we have a mortgage and we need money to raise our daughter. How can we live without money? If you're sentenced to prison, people will look down on me and our daughter will be ridiculed by her classmates. You have to think of us, too! You should stop believing." I knew it was inevitable that my husband, as a nonbeliever, would have these concerns, so I said to him, "The Communist Party is atheist and has always persecuted those who believe in God. I won't give up my faith because of the Party's persecution. The fearful can't get into the kingdom of heaven—don't you know that? Disasters are getting worse and worse now. The

Savior Almighty God has expressed the truth and performed the work of judgment of the last days, which is to completely cleanse and save mankind so we can survive calamity and be taken into God's kingdom. It's an opportunity that will never come again! Faith in God means there'll be some temporary suffering and danger, but through this we can acquire the truth and be saved by God. That's what matters." My husband said, "Entering God's kingdom is a long way off. The most realistic thing right now is to live a good life. I'm not concerned about what may happen in the future, and I'm not going to give it any thought." Later, he argued with me when he saw that I was still going to gatherings and doing my duty. He said: "Always being on edge like this is no way to live. If you carry on believing, our family will break up." I thought: "Perhaps the family really will break up if I insist on my faith. My daughter's only nine, and not having a full family would hurt her so much!" At the time I didn't want to lose my family, but my husband was standing in the way of my faith, and if things went on like this how could I do my duty? My daughter, my family, and God—I wasn't ready to give up any of them. Just as I was struggling with this dilemma, I thought of Lord Jesus' words: **"He that loves father or mother more than Me is not worthy of Me: and he that loves son or daughter more than Me is not worthy of Me. And he that takes not his cross, and follows after Me, is not worthy of Me"** (Matthew 10:37–38). I thought of all those saints through the ages who gave up everything to fulfill God's commission by spreading the gospel and bearing witness to God, and how I, nourished by so much truth from God, had to be mindful of God's intentions and couldn't abandon faith and duty just to protect my family. I thought about God, who came incarnate to save us outright from Satan's power, quietly expressing truths to water and sustain us while enduring oppression, arrest, vilification and condemnation by the great red

dragon as well as rejection and slander by the religious community. So great is the love that God has for mankind! I'd received so much from God, all the while treasuring my family and daughter and not thinking of how to repay God's love. Where was my conscience? At this thought, I felt deeply indebted to God and resolved that no matter how my husband stood in my way or pressured me, I would follow God; I would spread the gospel and bear witness to God.

Subsequently, the Communist Party's oppression of the church became more severe and my husband's opposition intensified. In the latter half of 2007, under the guise of maintaining stability for the Olympic Games, the Party cracked down on religious belief and suppressed churches, and a number of brothers and sisters were arrested. One morning in September as I was getting ready to go out to share the gospel, my husband stopped me and wouldn't let me leave. He called my older brother over, and said, "A few days ago your cousin said that the Committee of Political and Legal Affairs coordinated a joint operation of the security and justice agencies, deploying lots of personnel to carry out mass arrests of believers in Almighty God. Once arrested, they're sentenced. So stop believing in God, okay?" My brother also urged me, "I know that faith is a good thing, but the Party doesn't allow people to have faith in God. We haven't the strength to fight them, so if you must practice your faith, do it at home. Stop going out to spread the gospel. What would you do if you were arrested?" I said: "I know that you want the best for me, but the most just thing to do is to have faith in God and share the gospel, so that more people can be saved by God and survive. This is the greatest possible good deed. Wouldn't it be incredibly selfish of me to stop sharing the gospel just to protect myself?" At that, my husband dropped to his knees and said, "I'm begging you. For our home, for our child, stop having faith in God. Faith means our daughter



wouldn't get into university or go on to find a good job. Her prospects would be ruined! We only have one child—you have to think of her! If you're arrested people will talk about me behind my back when I go out. Tell me, what dignity does that leave me?" Seeing my husband like that, I really didn't know what to do. He was always so proud, but here he was begging me on his knees, in front of my brother. It would only hurt him even more if I insisted on my belief. And what would happen to my daughter if the Party eventually prevented her from going to university on account of my faith, leaving her unable to find a good job and make a career for herself? Even my brother was opposed to my faith. My family would probably stand in the way of my faith if they knew it was causing a rift between me and my husband. That would make the path of faith even harder for me. But if I gave in to my husband and promised to give up my faith, wouldn't that be betraying God? The more I thought about it, the more anxious I became, so I said a silent prayer asking God to protect my heart. At that point I recalled a passage of God's words which I had read before: **"In every step of work that God does within people, externally it appears to be interactions between people, as if born of human arrangements or from human disturbance. But behind the scenes, every step of work, and everything that happens, is a wager made by Satan before God, and requires people to stand firm in their testimony to God"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Only Loving God Is Truly Believing in God). Indeed! On the outside it looked as if it was my family standing in my way, but actually it was Satan tempting me. Believing in God and doing my duty, I was on the right path. Satan was using my family to stand in my way and get me to betray God. I couldn't fall for Satan's tricks, but I had to stand firm, bear witness and humiliate Satan. Thinking on this, I solemnly said to them, "God decides everything. Our work and

our futures are orchestrated by God, regardless of what the Communist Party says. The rise and fall of countries and political parties, not to mention the fate of one insignificant individual, are all in God's hands. You both know how ill I was before becoming a believer, and I would have died long ago if not for God. God gave me this life and I've received so much from Him. For me to not have faith or do my duty would be unconscionable. Would I even be human? Would my life have any meaning?" My brother frowned and said, "It's true, you were cured after finding faith. But we're living under the Communist Party now, and they want to arrest believers. Isn't going out to preach the gospel just putting yourself in the line of fire?" My husband was at his side, agreeing. But I insisted on my faith, no matter what they said. Seeing I wasn't to be moved, they turned to harsher tactics. About a month later, the moment I got home from a gathering one day, my husband slapped me in the face and said angrily, "The Party is arresting believers like crazy but you're still attending gatherings. I told you not to believe, but you insist on believing! I've respected you all these years, never raising a hand against you. Your brother and sister-in-law say I've spoiled you and should keep you in line, and not give you the opportunity to carry on believing in God." I stared at him, astonished at his behavior. Afraid to look me in the eye, he lowered his head and said, "I really don't want to hit you. I don't want you to be arrested and thrown in jail for your faith in God. It's for your own good." Hearing this from him was really upsetting. My husband had always been really good to me, but out of fear of persecution he'd become a tool for the Communist Party. He was trying to get me to betray God. How was that for my own good? Later on, seeing I was determined to keep my faith, he simply stopped going to work. He followed me closely, wouldn't let me read God's words, go to gatherings, or do my duty. There was a lot of work

to do in the church at that time, but he had me under house arrest and I couldn't do my duty. I urged him not to block my faith. I said, "God protected you those times you were nearly in a car crash, back when you were supporting my faith. God has given us so much grace, how can you resist and reject Him?" He said, "In the past, your faith in God was beneficial, but now it's not the same. So long as you have faith in God, the Party won't leave you alone and our family will suffer. Can we survive off faith?" Later, not wishing to be implicated, he said we should divorce. That hit me hard, but my hatred for the great red dragon was greater. He was persecuting and beating me and now he wanted a divorce. It all stemmed from the Communist Party's oppression. I recalled this passage from God's words: **"Now is the time: Man has long since gathered all his strength, he has devoted all his efforts and paid every price for this, to tear off the hideous face of this devil and allow people, who have been blinded, and who have endured every manner of suffering and hardship, to rise up from their pain and rebel against this evil old devil. Why put up such an impenetrable obstacle to the work of God? Why employ various tricks to deceive God's folk? Where is the true freedom and the legitimate rights and interests? Where is the fairness? Where is the comfort? Where is the warmth? Why use deceitful schemes to trick God's people?"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Work and Entry (8)). The Party is an anti-God, God-hating demon. It arrests and persecutes believers to hinder and wipe out God's work. It fabricates all sorts of rumors to slander God's work and fool the people so that they also oppose God and are ultimately destroyed. It even oppresses and persecutes the families of Christians, so that whole families suffer for the faith of one person. My family supported my faith at first, but the Party's persecution and rumors led them astray, turning them into accomplices resisting God.

**The Party is so wicked! I thought of another passage of God's words: "As someone who is normal, and who pursues the love of God, entry into the kingdom to become one of the people of God is your true future, and a life that is of the utmost value and significance; no one is more blessed than you. Why do I say this? Because those who do not believe in God live for the flesh, and they live for Satan, but today you live for God, and live to follow the will of God. That is why I say your lives are of the utmost significance. Only this group of people, who have been selected by God, are able to live out a life of the utmost significance: No one else on earth is able to live out a life of such value and meaning"**

(The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Know God's Newest Work and Follow His Footsteps). Pondering God's words was illuminating for me. I had accepted God's work of the last days. I'd been able to enjoy so much watering and sustenance from His words, do my duty as a created being, share the gospel and bear witness for God, and help more people to come before God and be saved. It was the most just, most valuable thing to be doing, and I couldn't give up my faith and my duty to protect my family. I had to follow God until the end, even if it meant getting a divorce. So, I said to my husband, "I'm committed to taking this path. Since you insist on divorce, I agree."

We went to the Civil Affairs Bureau to handle the procedure that very day. Just as I was filling out the paperwork, my brother and his wife burst in, dragged me into their car without a word and took me to their shop. My dad was already there, and the moment he saw me he raised his hand to hit me, but the staff rushed over to stop him. He yelled, "I thought the government supported your faith. I didn't know you could be arrested and that your family would be implicated. You can't carry on believing in God. I'll disown you if you do!" I said, "Dad, we were created by God, He rules over everything. Humans should have faith and worship Him." Before I

could finish, my brother barked, “You still want to have faith if it means losing your family?” I said firmly, “There’s nothing wrong with my faith. He wants this divorce—I’m not the one walking away from the family.” My brother yelled, “My friend who works for the government said it has issued a document designating believers in Almighty God as key targets for suppression. He told us to monitor you and keep you from your faith so that we’re not implicated alongside you.” At this, he picked up a bamboo strip and hit me in the eyes with it while saying, “This’ll teach you for not seeing how things are!” It really hurt to be treated like that by my family. I used all my strength to break free from them and ran outside. I was sobbing all the way back home. I felt so helpless and alone, and really didn’t know how to stay on this path. In tears, I prayed to God, “Oh God, now my whole family is against me, standing in my way, telling me I can’t have faith. It’s really hard for me. God, please guide me to understand Your intention and know how to get through this situation.” I thought of a passage of God’s words after praying: **“Because it is embarked upon in a land that opposes God, all of God’s work faces tremendous obstacles, and accomplishing many of His words takes time; thus, people are refined as a result of God’s words, which is also part of suffering. It is tremendously difficult for God to carry out His work in the land of the great red dragon—but it is through this difficulty that God does one stage of His work, making manifest His wisdom and His wondrous deeds, and using this opportunity to make this group of people complete”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Is the Work of God As Simple As Man Imagines?). Through God’s words I understood that God is working in the last days in the country of the great red dragon, where He is most fiercely opposed, and that we who follow Him are certain to suffer oppression and exclusion. God works this way so we can see through the great red dragon and its evil, anti-

God essence, and not be misled by it anymore. It's also to perfect our faith so we can learn to lean on God through hardship, and follow God without being constrained by Satan's forces, and have true faith in God. But after a little suffering I felt that having faith was too hard. I was living in negativity and wanted to escape the situation. I really lacked faith. Confronting these hardships, I knew I had to accept them from God. I needed to pray and seek the truth, and stand firm in my witness for God. As a created being, that was what I ought to do. I didn't feel so miserable once I understood God's intention. Later, I learned my husband didn't actually want a divorce, but had talked about it with my family and they'd thought this would force me to give up my faith.

Not long after that, when my husband was taking us shopping in the car, he suddenly turned onto the freeway and drove straight to a mental hospital. He dragged me in to the consulting room and said to the doctor, "She believes in Almighty God and has been evangelizing. You have to lock her in and keep her apart from other believers. Like a detox. She can come out once she's free of her faith and won't evangelize anymore." It was so heartbreaking. He wanted to put me in with mental patients to stop my faith in God. Being locked up in there could drive a person crazy! I said to the doctor right away, "I'm a doctor too. First determine if I have any mental health issues before admitting me." Then I gave him an orderly rundown of how I'd managed our household affairs over the previous few years. After hearing me out, the doctor told my husband, "She's not mentally ill. We can't admit her. We can't guarantee her safety if you insist on leaving her here." My husband kept demanding that the doctor take me in. I said, "If you lock me up, I'll commit suicide here." Afraid that it would be his responsibility, the doctor wouldn't admit me. My husband had no choice other than to take me home.

I saw clearly from what had happened that while my husband always claimed to be doing what was best for me, it was just a show. Time after time he was protecting his own interests, while hurting and humiliating me. He even wanted to institutionalize me. He was capable of doing anything to keep me from my faith. That he was going against God, in step with the Party, demonstrated that he too loved evil, venerated power and hated the truth. God's words say: **"Believers and nonbelievers are not compatible; rather, they are opposed to one another"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. God and Man Will Enter Into Rest Together). We were on two different paths. I despaired of him, and it was only for the sake of our child that I didn't get a divorce. After that, he never stopped arguing and shouting, and demanding that I give up my faith. Especially in the run-up to the Olympics, when my cousin said that the government was focusing on arresting believers in Almighty God, and that believers were being punished harshly and no one could bail them out, my husband kept a closer watch on me and followed my every movement. He had me under house arrest for 11 days. There was no way for me to practice my faith at home. To do that, and perform a duty, I would have to leave the family. But I really couldn't bear to part with my daughter. It would be so hard for her if I left! Without me by her side and no one to look after her properly, what would happen if she was led astray? Tears poured from my eyes whenever I thought of it. In the depths of misery, I thought of a passage of God's words: **"You must suffer hardship for the truth, you must give yourself to the truth, you must endure humiliation for the truth, and to gain more of the truth you must undergo more suffering. This is what you should do. You must not throw away the truth for the sake of a peaceful family life, and you must not lose your life's dignity and integrity for the sake of momentary enjoyment. You should pursue all that is beautiful and**

**good, and you should pursue a path in life that is more meaningful. If you lead such a vulgar life, and do not pursue any objectives, do you not waste your life? What can you gain from such a life? You should forsake all enjoyments of the flesh for the sake of one truth, and should not throw away all truths for the sake of a little enjoyment. People like this have no integrity or dignity; there is no meaning to their existence!”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. The Experiences of Peter: His Knowledge of Chastisement and Judgment). After reading God’s words, I thought back over my years of faith. Satan was always using my relatives to oppress and disturb me, to push me away from God and get me to betray Him. I was with my family but I wasn’t happy, and my husband wouldn’t let me read God’s words or share the gospel and do my duty. It was a painful way to live. God arranged for me to be born in the last days and accept His gospel so I could pursue the truth, be saved and fulfill my duty as a created being. That was what I should pursue. I thought of God’s words: **“The fate of man is controlled by the hands of God. You are incapable of controlling yourself: Despite man always rushing and busying himself on his own behalf, he remains incapable of controlling himself. If you could know your own prospects, if you could control your own fate, would you still be a created being?”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Restoring the Normal Life of Man and Taking Him to a Wonderful Destination). It’s true. For every person that comes into this world, God determined long ago what path we’d take and how much we’d suffer. No one can help anyone else. I gave birth to my daughter, but her fate was in God’s hands. God long since decided how much she’d suffer and how many blessings she would enjoy in her life. Even if I was by her side, I couldn’t shoulder any of the suffering that was destined for her. I couldn’t even control my own fate, let alone hers. I just



had to entrust my daughter to God and submit to His rule. Then one day, while my husband was asleep, I managed to sneak out of the house.

To my surprise, just a couple weeks later, a leader told me my husband was bothering the brothers and sisters every day and saying that if I didn't go back he'd report them to the police. I had to go home so they wouldn't get in trouble. This time around, my husband monitored me more strictly. He kept me locked indoors, with the key hidden, and was always within a few feet of me. He watched even when I was cooking and when I went to the bathroom. He kept the TV on from morning till night, forcing me to watch the news and patriotic movies with him every day, saying that he wanted to brainwash me. He said my cousin told him not to give me any chance to pray or read God's words, and that to get me to abandon my faith he had to keep pumping whatever was on TV into me, so that there was no room for religious thoughts. He also told me that he couldn't give me a moment of peace, because the moment I prayed, God would give me a way out, then I'd go to gatherings and evangelize again. Angrily, I told him, "It's my freedom to have faith. Why are you going along with the Communist Party, oppressing me and depriving me of my freedom? You've enjoyed plenty of God's grace thanks to my faith, and you've seen what God can do. Now you're blocking my faith and oppressing me. It's not just oppressing me—it's going against God!" To my surprise he yelled back, "I'm going against God, so have Him come punish me!" I was absolutely shocked. How could he say such a thing? He'd lost all reason. He kept me locked up like this for a week or so, unable to even step outside. I couldn't read God's words, go to gatherings, or do my duty. It was sheer misery. I had no appetite and couldn't sleep. I was thinking how everyone else was doing a duty, while I remained locked indoors by my husband, deprived even of the right to pray. If that went on, wouldn't I grow farther and farther from God?

What's more, my family members were all on my husband's side, oppressing me. I could hardly take it anymore! The more I thought about it the worse I felt. I was alone, and helpless.

One evening when my husband was asleep, I said a silent prayer to God. It was, "God, I cannot read Your words. I feel so weak inside. Oh God, my stature is so small. Please give me faith and strength." I thought of a passage of His words after praying: **"Those whom God refers to as 'overcomers' are those who are still able to stand firm in their witness and maintain their confidence and devotion to God when under the influence of Satan and while being laid siege to by Satan, that is, when they find themselves amidst the forces of darkness. If you are still able to keep a pure heart before God and maintain your genuine love for God no matter what, then you are standing firm in your witness in front of God, and this is what God refers to as being an 'overcomer'"**

(The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. You Should Maintain Your Devotion to God).

God's words showed me that in the last days, He wants to make a group of people into overcomers, who, under Satan's attacks and persecution, will not yield to the forces of darkness. Instead, they will hold fast to their faith and their devotion, and bear wonderful witness to God. I felt inspired, and ready to submit and learn a lesson. No matter how my husband blocked and oppressed me, I'd stand firm in my testimony and satisfy God. Later, when my husband was asleep, I'd contemplate God's words, silently praying or singing a hymn to myself, and this brought me some joy. On the nineteenth day of my house arrest, my husband began getting headaches, neck pain and backache the moment he picked a fight with me. The angrier he was the more it hurt, to the point of crying out in pain, until he didn't dare argue anymore. Finally he said: "I can't take it anymore! The longer I keep you locked up the more spirited you become. I'm just making myself sick

instead.” The following day he went to work leaving me locked indoors. One day I happened to find the key, and slipped out of the house while he wasn’t there. I was so grateful to God for providing a way out, and that I could finally attend gatherings and do my duty again.

My husband didn’t monitor me as closely after that. Occasionally, when he tried hard to oppose and stop me, he’d get sick and have a terrible pain in his neck. One day, in March 2012, he told me, “All these years I’ve wanted you to choose between our family and your faith, but you never gave up your faith. Let’s put an end to this today. There are two paths ahead of you. If you stay in this house, you can’t follow God, and if you follow God, you can never come back to this house.” I said to him, with conviction, “I’ve chosen the path of belief in God, and I’ll never turn back.” Then I packed my bags and left the house, joining the ranks of all who do their duty. Thanks be to Almighty God!

## **45. The Hidden Reasons for Fearing Responsibility**

By George, Japan

I was in charge of watering work in the church. As more people accepted Almighty God's work of the last days, our church split into three different churches, and I was put in charge of one of them. After the division, I found that lots of newcomers who weren't gathering regularly were assigned to my church. I thought: Since we were lacking watering staff, supporting all those people who weren't gathering properly would require lots of time and energy. If they dropped out because they weren't watered well, the brothers and sisters might say I was incapable and of poor caliber. That would be so embarrassing. Then I might be pruned or held responsible for their departure. If I wasn't in charge, but was just one of the watering staff, I wouldn't have to shoulder that responsibility. I felt like it was a lot of pressure, as if I were saddled with a large burden, and I felt weighed down in my heart. The leader wanted us to cultivate more people to address the shortage of waterers. But seeing how many new believers weren't gathering properly, I was consumed by the difficulty. I thought I wouldn't be able to train people soon enough, and felt discouraged. After that, I became very passive in my work. I wasn't training or properly watering those I should have been training and watering, which hurt our work. Feeling really upset and kind of guilty, I prayed to God, "God, I'm lacking stature. Seeing how many difficulties and issues are in this new church, I've wanted to walk away. I know that's not Your intention. Please guide me in self-reflection, and in changing my incorrect state so that I can take on this work."

I read a passage of God's words in my devotionals. Almighty God says: **"Some people are afraid of shouldering responsibility while performing their duty. If the church gives them a job to do, they will first consider whether the job requires them to shoulder responsibility, and if it does, they will not accept the job. Their conditions for performing a duty are, first, that it must be a slack job; second, that it is not busy or tiring; and third, that no matter what they do, they do not shoulder any responsibility. This is the only kind of duty they take on. What sort of a person is this? Is this not a slippery, deceitful person? They do not want to shoulder even the smallest amount of responsibility. They even fear that leaves will break their skull when they fall from trees. What duty can a person like this perform? What use could they have in the house of God? The work of the house of God has to do with the work of battling Satan, as well as spreading the kingdom gospel. What duty does not entail responsibilities? Would you say that being a leader carries responsibility? Are their responsibilities not all the greater, and must they not bear responsibility all the more? Regardless of whether you spread the gospel, testify, make videos, and so on—no matter what work you do—so long as it pertains to the truth principles, it carries with it responsibilities. If the performance of your duty is unprincipled, it will affect the work of God's house, and if you are afraid of shouldering responsibility, then you cannot perform any duty. Is someone who fears taking on responsibility in performing their duty cowardly, or is there a problem with their disposition? You must be able to tell the difference. The fact is that this is not an issue of cowardice. If that person were after wealth, or they were doing something in their own interest, how could they be so brave? They would take on any risk. But when they do things for the church, for**

**God's house, they take on no risk at all. Such people are selfish and vile, the most treacherous of all. Anyone who does not take on responsibility in performing a duty is not the least bit sincere to God, to say nothing of their loyalty. What sort of person dares to take on responsibility? What sort of person has the courage to bear a heavy burden? Someone who takes the lead and goes bravely forth at the most crucial moment in the work of God's house, who is not afraid to bear a heavy responsibility and endure great hardship when they see the work that is most important and crucial. That is someone loyal to God, a good soldier of Christ. Is it the case that everyone who fears taking on responsibility in their duty does so because they do not understand the truth? No; it is a problem in their humanity. They have no sense of justice or responsibility, they are selfish and vile people, not true-hearted believers in God, and they do not accept the truth in the least. For this reason, they cannot be saved. Believers in God must pay a great price in order to gain the truth, and they will encounter many obstacles to practicing it. They must forsake things, abandon their fleshly interests, and endure some suffering. Only then will they be able to put the truth into practice. So, can one who fears taking on responsibility practice the truth? They certainly cannot practice the truth, let alone gain it. They are afraid of practicing the truth, of incurring a loss to their interests; they are afraid of being humiliated, of disparagement, and of judgment, and they do not dare to practice the truth. Consequently, they cannot gain it, and no matter how many years they believe in God, they cannot attain His salvation”** (The Word, Vol.

4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Eight: They Would Have Others Submit Only to Them, Not the Truth or God (Part One)). Seeing what was revealed in God's words, I felt terrible. God says those afraid of taking on responsibility in their duty are the most

selfish, vile, and deceitful. They can't practice the truth and can't possibly achieve salvation. I was acting that way. When I saw there were lots of newcomers gathering irregularly and few candidates for training, I wasn't thinking of how to be considerate of God's intentions, cultivating viable candidates and getting new believers watered well so they could establish roots on the true way sooner. I was treating them like a burden. I thought about how much time and energy it would take to support them, and that the others would look down on me if I didn't do it well, and I'd even be pruned, and held responsible if it was serious. It seemed like taxing work that might produce no results and I felt resistant. Though I forced myself to do it, I was passive about it. Since I was irresponsible, people who should have been trained weren't, while some stopped coming regularly. God's gospel of the last days is expanding rapidly now, and more people are turning to God. Watering and supporting new believers well is God's urgent intention, but I only thought of my own interests, not God's intention. I didn't consider the newcomers' life entry, either. I was so selfish and so disappointing to God! And in the other new churches, I noticed that others could uphold the church's work with no thought for their personal gains or losses. They did their utmost to water new believers no matter how hard it was. They were true believers who were devoted to their duties. I was ashamed and humiliated. I had to stop considering my own interests and holding up church work. I needed to shoulder this responsibility and give my all to getting newcomers watered well. I started cooperating proactively after that and put effort into watering some people who could be cultivated. Once they understood God's intention they became active in their duty, too. We worked together to do our jobs and support new believers together. After a bit of time, quite a few newcomers were gathering regularly. I was really happy and grateful to God.

But before long, I ran into the same situation again. One day, the leader said to me, “The Chenguang Church was just established. A number of new believers aren’t gathering properly and they’re short on good waterers. Work is progressing slowly. Let’s put that church into your hands.” When the leader said this, I realized that God’s intention was behind this situation. The last time a church was split up, I was afraid of taking on responsibility, which delayed the church’s work. This time I had to submit and do my duty properly. But I wavered when I took another look at the Chenguang Church’s current state. The church I was in charge of was just starting to do better and there was lots of work left to do. Taking on another church would take a lot of time and energy. If I couldn’t adequately support Chenguang and couldn’t take care of the work at my current church, what would the others think of me? Just managing one church wouldn’t be so hectic, and I could focus my efforts on doing my work well. Then everyone would see me with new eyes, and I might even get a promotion. At this thought, I felt like the Chenguang Church would be too much to juggle. No matter what, it wouldn’t benefit me, and I didn’t want to accept it. But if I turned it down and no one took it on, that would impact the church’s work. I felt conflicted. The leader saw what sort of state I was in and shared a passage of God’s words with me: **“If you are fairly skilled in some field and have been working in that field longer than most, then you should be assigned the more difficult work. You should accept this from God and submit. Don’t be picky and complain, saying, ‘Why am I being picked on? They give the easy tasks to other people and give me the hard ones. Are they trying to make life difficult for me?’ ‘Trying to make life difficult for you’? What do you mean by that? Work arrangements are tailored to each person; those who are abler do more. If you have learned much and been given much by God, you**



**should be given a heavier burden—not to make life difficult for you, but because it is an exact fit for you. It is your duty, so don't try to pick and choose, or say no, or try to get out of it. Why do you think it is hard? The fact is that if you put some heart into it, you would be entirely up to the task. Your thinking that it is hard, that it is biased treatment, that you are being deliberately picked on—that is the revelation of a corrupt disposition. It is refusal to do your duty, not accepting from God. That is not practicing the truth. When you pick and choose in performing your duty, doing whatever is light and easy, only doing what makes you look good, this is a corrupt satanic disposition. That you cannot accept your duty or submit proves that you are still rebellious toward God, that you are opposing, refusing, and avoiding Him. This is a corrupt disposition”** (The Word, Vol. 3. The

Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Part Three). This passage was moving for me. The leader wasn't trying to make things hard for me by having me take on another church. I'd been doing watering work for a while, so I should be able to manage it if I just sacrificed a little bit more. However, I was being too selfish, only thinking of my own interests and unwilling to sacrifice more. I was also afraid I'd look bad if I didn't do a good job, so I didn't want to take it on, but just rejected it—I wasn't submissive at all. The church entrusting me with something as important as watering new believers was God's grace and elevation. I should submit to it unconditionally and do my absolute best. That's what someone with a conscience and reason would do. By leaning on God and truly cooperating with Him, I knew God would guide me to do the job well. Then I prayed to God in my heart, ready to let go of my concerns and take on that responsibility.

Later I did some reflection and seeking. Why did I always want to turn duties down and never shoulder a burden? I read something in God's words: **"No matter what they're doing, antichrists first consider their own interests, and they only act once they've thought it all out; they do not truly, sincerely, and absolutely submit to the truth without compromise, but do so selectively and conditionally. What condition is this? It is that their status and reputation must be safeguarded, and must not suffer any loss. Only after this condition is satisfied will they decide and choose what to do. That is, antichrists give serious consideration to how to treat the truth principles, God's commissions, and the work of God's house, or how to deal with the things they face. They do not consider how to satisfy God's intentions, how to keep from damaging the interests of God's house, how to satisfy God, or how to benefit the brothers and sisters; these are not the things they consider. What do antichrists consider? Whether their own status and reputation will be affected, and whether their prestige will be lowered. If doing something according to the truth principles benefits the work of the church and the brothers and sisters, but would cause their own reputation to suffer and cause many people to realize their true stature and know what sort of nature essence they have, then they will definitely not act in accordance with the truth principles. If doing some real work will cause more people to think highly of them, look up to them and admire them, allow them to gain even greater prestige, or enable their words to carry authority and make more people submit to them, then they will choose to do it that way; otherwise, they will never choose to disregard their own interests out of consideration for the interests of God's house or of the brothers and sisters. This is the nature essence of antichrists. Isn't it selfish and despicable?"** (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Nine (Part Three)).

**“Until people have experienced God’s work and understood the truth, it is Satan’s nature that takes charge and dominates them from within. What, specifically, does that nature entail? For example, why are you selfish? Why do you protect your own position? Why do you have such strong feelings? Why do you enjoy those unrighteous things? Why do you like those evils? What is the basis for your fondness for such things? Where do these things come from? Why are you so happy to accept them? By now, you have all come to understand that the main reason behind all these things is that Satan’s poison is within man. So what is Satan’s poison? How can it be expressed? For example, if you ask, ‘How should people live? What should people live for?’ people will answer, ‘Every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost.’ This single phrase expresses the very root of the problem. Satan’s philosophy and logic have become people’s lives. No matter what people pursue, they do so for themselves—and so they live only for themselves. ‘Every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost’—this is the life philosophy of man, and it also represents human nature. These words have already become the nature of corrupt mankind and they are the true portrait of corrupt mankind’s satanic nature. This satanic nature has already become the basis for corrupt mankind’s existence. For several thousand years, corrupt mankind has lived by this venom of Satan, right up to the present day”** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. How to Walk the Path of Peter). I found the answer in God’s words. The main reason I didn’t want to shoulder a heavy burden was that I was living by an antichrist’s disposition, being selfish and deceitful. I linked every single thing I did to my own interests, with a precondition that it couldn’t compromise my personal interests. I wasn’t considering God’s intentions or upholding the work of the church. When I saw that many

newcomers in my new church weren't gathering regularly, I was afraid the effectiveness of my duty would be impacted, which would hurt my reputation. When the leader asked me to oversee Chenguang Church, I knew that if the new believers there weren't watered soon, they could be disrupted by religious pastors and drop out. But I didn't want to accept the watering work there. I was weighing the pros and cons for myself, just thinking about how to get the work I was already responsible for done. That way, it wouldn't be so stressful and I wouldn't need to suffer much. If I accomplished something in the end I'd get the others' approval and leave a good impression. I was living by the satanic poison, "Every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost." Faced with anything, I first thought about whether it would be good for my reputation. If my interests would be harmed, even if it would be good for the church's work, I wouldn't want to do it. I'd resist and refuse, not being genuine or submissive to God at all. Those who had just accepted God's work of the last days didn't know the truth yet. They were susceptible to the pastors' interference that could mislead them and drive them away, so the church assigned me to water and support them. Faced with such a key task, I didn't take on the responsibility and fulfill my duty, but was afraid my reputation would suffer if I didn't do a good job. That's the same kind of disposition as an antichrist—selfish, despicable, and self-interested. I was filled with regret and guilt. I felt like I really owed God, and I wanted to repent to Him.

I read more of God's words after that: **"What is the standard by which a person's actions and behavior are judged to be good or evil? It is whether or not they, in their thoughts, revelations, and actions, possess the testimony of putting the truth into practice and of living out the truth reality. If you do not have this reality or live this out, then without doubt, you are an evildoer. How does God regard evildoers? To**

**God, your thoughts and external acts do not bear testimony for Him, nor do they humiliate and defeat Satan; instead, they bring shame to Him, and they are riddled with marks of the dishonor that you have brought upon Him. You are not testifying for God, you are not expending yourself for God, nor are you fulfilling your responsibilities and obligations to God; instead, you are acting for your own sake. What does ‘for your own sake’ mean? To be precise, it means for Satan’s sake. Therefore, in the end, God will say, ‘Depart from Me, you that work iniquity.’ In God’s eyes, your actions will not be seen as good deeds, they will be considered evil deeds. Not only will they fail to gain God’s approval—they will be condemned. What does one hope to gain from such a belief in God? Would such belief not come to naught in the end?”** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Freedom and Liberation Can Be Gained Only by Casting Off One’s Corrupt Disposition). God’s words are very clear. God doesn’t look at how much we suffer, but at what’s in our hearts and what we reveal as we do our duty, and if we have testimony of practicing the truth. If a person’s motive in their duty isn’t to satisfy God, if they’re not practicing the truth, then no matter how much they give, God sees it as doing evil and going against Him. Thinking back on what my mindset over that period of time revealed, I was always thinking of and planning around my own interests, and wanting to evade my duty. Though I reluctantly accepted it, I wasn’t being responsible. I didn’t train those I should have trained, and some new believers weren’t gathering regularly because I didn’t water them in time. My motives and behaviors were disgusting to God. In God’s eyes, I was doing evil and resisting Him. I’d been a believer for years and had enjoyed so much sustenance of the truth from God, but never thought of repaying God’s love. When the church’s work most needed support, I didn’t want to shoulder a heavy burden. I wasn’t doing

my duty well and satisfying God. I really didn't have any conscience or humanity. I silently prayed, "Oh God, in my duty I've been pursuing name and status without protecting the church's work at all. I'm so selfish. I haven't done my duty well, and I'm deeply indebted to You. God, thank You for giving me another chance. I want to repent, take on this burden, and do my utmost in my duty to make up for past transgressions."

Later, I read a passage of God's words that gave me a path of practice. God says: **"For all who perform a duty, no matter how profound or shallow their understanding of the truth is, the simplest way to practice entering into the truth reality is to think of the interests of God's house in everything, and to let go of one's selfish desires, personal intents, motives, pride, and status. Put the interests of God's house first—this is the least one should do. If a person who performs a duty cannot even do this much, then how can they be said to be performing their duty? That is not performing one's duty. You should first think of the interests of God's house, be considerate of God's intentions, and consider the work of the church. Put these things first and foremost; only after that can you think about the stability of your status or how others regard you. Do you not feel that this becomes a little easier when you divide it into two steps and make some compromises? If you practice like this for a while, you will come to feel that satisfying God is not such a difficult thing. Furthermore, you should be able to fulfill your responsibilities, perform your obligations and duty, and set aside your selfish desires, intents, and motives; you should show consideration for God's intentions, and put the interests of God's house, the work of the church, and the duty that you are supposed to perform first. After experiencing this for a while, you will feel that this is a good way to comport yourself. It is living straightforwardly and**

**honestly, and not being a base, vile person; it is living justly and honorably rather than being despicable, base, and a good-for-nothing. You will feel that this is how a person should act and the image that they should live out. Gradually, your desire to satisfy your own interests will lessen”** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Freedom

and Liberation Can Be Gained Only by Casting Off One’s Corrupt Disposition). From God’s words, I found a path of practice. It was to let go of my own interests and put the church’s interests first when something came up. I wanted to do what God’s word says, stop considering whether my own interests would suffer or not, and stop considering what others would think of me. I had to fulfill my responsibilities and take on the work. I also realized that I never wanted to do challenging work, afraid I’d be looked down on, or pruned if I didn’t do it well. I didn’t understand God’s good intentions of saving man: Giving me more difficult work is God’s grace. God is using this challenge to help me learn to lean on Him and seek the truth to resolve problems. In the course of my duty, carrying a heavy burden, facing difficulties, and being pruned or revealed are all good things. They give me the chance to better see my faults and shortcomings so that I can be more focused in seeking and equipping myself with the truth to make up for my weak points. That’s beneficial for my understanding of the truth and progress in life. It’s God’s love. Once I understood God’s intention, my attitude toward my duty shifted. I saw that to manage the work of two churches, I couldn’t just rely on my own abilities. What I could do was limited, so I had to focus on training people. Once more brothers and sisters knew God’s intentions, they could take on duties and that would make the job easier. Then I could focus my energy on critical tasks. So, I discussed and confirmed people to train with the watering staff, then worked to hold gatherings and fellowship on God’s words to resolve their actual difficulties and issues. I was

surprised when some brothers and sisters gained an understanding of God's work, gained faith, and wanted to do a duty. When we worked together, I became much more efficient in my duty, and some projects were done in no time. They also gained some practice and had more energy for their duty. After being watered and supported for some time, lots of new believers had gained some understanding of God's work, had laid a foundation on the true way, and were actively attending gatherings. Seeing all this was really moving for me. After I let go of my own interests, took on a burden, and tried my best to do my duty, before I knew it I'd made some progress and was accomplishing a lot more in my duty. Now, I'm no longer afraid of taking on responsibility, and I want to practice the truth and do my duty well to satisfy God.



## 46. Willfulness Hurts Others and Yourself

By Lynn, Australia

I was elected as a church leader in April 2020, to be principally responsible for watering work. A few months ago, I noticed that some new believers weren't consistent in attending gatherings, coming late and leaving early. Some were busy with school or work and said they'd come when they had time. Some didn't come because they were misled by the rumors and fallacies of the CCP and religious world. We tried to talk to them, but a few wouldn't answer the phone—it was as if they'd disappeared. I figured that since we'd tried to contact them, if they didn't want to attend gatherings, it wasn't our responsibility and we should just let them go. Besides, God wants the best of people, not just more people. He saves those who have true faith and love the truth. If they lacked true faith, no amount of effort from us would help. So, I didn't pray, seek, or discuss this with my leader, and just decided myself to give up on those newcomers. During this time, I reached out to a few of them, but they didn't want to attend gatherings, so I felt even more sure that my judgment had been correct. Later on, a sister I worked with noticed I'd given up on lots of new believers two months in a row and asked me if it was really appropriate to do that. She suggested that I could fellowship with our leader and learn the principles. I thought, "We handled this sort of thing the same way in the past. It's not like we didn't try to talk to the newcomers, we just can't get in touch with some of them now, and others don't even want to believe. There is no need for me to seek the principles." So I rejected her suggestion. I felt a little uneasy afterward, and wondered if it was really the right thing to do. But then I figured what I'd done couldn't be wrong because we'd offered them support, and that it wasn't our fault that they hadn't come to

gatherings. The key thing was that they weren't true believers in God. So I didn't pray or seek, and each month I gave up on some newcomers.

Later my leader found out I wasn't following the principles in giving up on newcomers and really harshly pruned me, saying I didn't know the principles and hadn't sought them, and that I just did whatever I wanted. She also said that coming before God was hard for every single one of the newcomers, that other brothers and sisters were putting everything into supporting them, but I was just nonchalantly sweeping some of them aside. I was writing them off without giving any loving support, and it was really irresponsible. Then she asked me, "Why aren't the newcomers attending gatherings? What sorts of notions and issues are they having? Have you fellowshiped to resolve them? Are you trying to think of other ways to help the newcomers?" The barrage of questions left me speechless, and scene after scene of me giving up on new believers played in my mind like a movie. Only then did I finally realize that I hadn't acted responsibly toward the newcomers, that I hadn't actually helped and supported them with love. I hadn't gained clarity on what their unresolved notions were or why they weren't coming to gatherings. They hadn't been to gatherings for a while, so I figured they'd given up believing, and paid them no mind. I saw I'd really failed in my responsibility for the new believers, and was going against the principles by casually abandoning them. I was really lacking humanity! So I came before God to pray, asking Him to enlighten me so I could understand His intention, and reflect on and know myself.

After that, I saw these words from God: **"You must exercise care and prudence and rely on love in your treatment of people who are investigating the true way. This is because everyone investigating the true way is a nonbeliever—even the religious among them are more or less nonbelievers—and they are all fragile: Should anything not accord**

**with their notions, they are liable to contradict it, and should any phrase not conform to their will, they are liable to dispute it. Therefore, spreading the gospel to them requires tolerance and patience from us. It requires extreme love on our part, and it requires some methods and approaches. What is crucial, though, is reading God's words to them, conveying to them all the truths God expresses to save man, and letting them hear the voice of God and the words of the Creator. In this way, they will gain benefits. The most important principle of spreading the gospel is to let those who thirst for God's appearance and love the truth read God's words and hear God's voice. Therefore, speak less to them the words of man and read more to them from God's words. After you have finished reading, fellowship on the truth so that they can hear God's voice and understand something of the truth. Then, they will be likely to return to God. Spreading the gospel is the responsibility and obligation of one and all. No matter who this obligation comes to, they must not shirk it or use any excuses or reasons to refuse it"** (The Word, Vol.

3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Spreading the Gospel Is the Duty to Which All Believers Are Honor-Bound). **"There are some people who have just come to believe in God who are often negative and weak. This is because they do not understand the truth, their stature is too small, and they lack any understanding of the various truths concerning faith in God. They therefore believe themselves to be of poor caliber, unable to keep up, have lots of difficulties—which breeds negativity, and even makes them throw in the towel: They take the decision to give up, to stop pursuing the truth. They eliminate themselves. What they think is, 'In any case, God will not approve of me for my belief in Him. God doesn't like me, either. And I don't have much time to go to gatherings. My family life is difficult and I need to earn money,' and so on. These all become the**

reasons why they can't go to gatherings. If you are not quick to find out what's going on, you will likely pigeonhole them as not loving the truth, and as not being someone who truly believes in God, or else you will pigeonhole them as coveting the comforts of the flesh, pursuing the world and being unable to let go of worldly things—and because of this, you will abandon them. Does this fit with the truth principles? Do these reasons truly represent their nature essence? In fact, it is because of their difficulties and entanglements that they become negative; if you can solve these problems, they will not be so negative, and will be able to follow God. When they are weak and negative, they need people's support. If you help them, they will be able to get back on their feet. But if you ignore them, it will be easy for them to give up because of negativity. This depends on whether the people who do the work of the church have love, on whether they carry this burden. That some people do not often come to gatherings does not mean that they do not truly believe in God, it is not tantamount to a dislike of the truth, it does not mean that they covet the pleasures of the flesh, and are not able to put aside their families and work—much less should they be judged as overly emotional or enamored of money. It's just that in these matters, people's statures and aspirations are different. Some people love the truth, and are able to pursue the truth; they are willing to suffer to give up these things. Some people have little faith, and when faced with actual difficulties they are powerless, and cannot overcome them. If nobody helps or supports them, they'll throw in the towel and give up on themselves; at such times, they need people's support, care, and assistance. That's unless they are a disbeliever, and are devoid of love for the truth, and a bad person—in which case they can be ignored. If they are someone who truly believes in God, and do not often go to

**gatherings because of a few genuine difficulties, then they must not be abandoned, but given loving help and support. If they are a good person, and have the comprehension ability, and are of good caliber, then they are even more deserving of help and support”** (The Word, Vol. 3.

The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Part Three). I was really ashamed of myself when I contemplated God’s words. God has become flesh in the last days and come to speak and work among us for our salvation. God suffers great humiliation, and with immense patience He saves humanity to the greatest extent possible. As long as one can hear the voice of God and accept the truth, God will save them and forsake no one. Although man transgresses, God forgives time and time again. As long as there is a little repentance in your heart, He will give you a chance. From this we can see that God overflows with mercy and tolerance for humans—His love for us is truly so great. Newcomers are like newborn babies, not yet understanding the truth and still lacking a foundation on the true way. God asks us to treat these newcomers with tremendous love and tolerance. As long as they have good humanity and truly believe in God, even if they’re weak, have religious notions, or are too busy to attend gatherings, we can’t casually dismiss them, and we certainly shouldn’t just write them off completely. If we think that they’re not true believers and abandon them because they aren’t coming to gatherings after we’ve only supported them a few times, we’re being irresponsible. When I was new to the faith, I wasn’t gathering regularly because I was busy at home. My brothers and sisters had been really understanding and would change gathering times to accommodate my schedule, and they fellowshiped with me tirelessly. Their help and support allowed me to see the importance of pursuing the truth, and I could feel God’s love and tolerance for me. After that I could attend gatherings regularly and take on duties. If my brothers and sisters had rejected me at

the time and thought I didn't love the truth and that I was a disbeliever, they'd have given up on me a long time ago, and I'd never be here today! I wasn't considering God's intentions at all, nor was I making allowances for the struggles of newcomers. I felt dissatisfied with them, thinking they were too busy and that they had too many notions. So I wrote them off and gave up on them, unwilling to pay more of a price to help them. My humanity was so malicious, and I hadn't taken on a shred of responsibility for these newcomers. I prayed to God, "God, I want to repent to You. I am willing to correct my wrongs as soon as I can, and support these newcomers with love."

After that I started going with other brothers and sisters to offer support to these newcomers. We learned about their struggles and patiently fellowshiped with them, and some of them came back to gatherings. One of them had been so busy with work that it was hard for her to come to gatherings, and she said, "As long as I believe in my heart, God will never cast me out." Before I'd thought that she was just focused on earning money and didn't have genuine faith, but gaining an understanding of her showed me that she hadn't been at gatherings because we'd set them at times that didn't work for her. So, we adjusted our gathering times to suit her and fellowshiped with her, "In the last days, God uses the truth to cleanse and save mankind. True believers should gather and fellowship on God's words, pursue the truth, cast off their corrupt dispositions, and change their life dispositions. That's the only way to be saved by God and enter into His kingdom. If we have faith but don't attend gatherings, if we only acknowledge God in words and believe in our hearts, if we treat our belief like a hobby, then that makes us the same as nonbelievers in the eyes of God. Even if we believed in Him until the very end, we would never obtain His approval." Through fellowship, this newcomer realized she'd

had the wrong perspective and wanted to attend gatherings. My heart was overflowing with remorse when I saw these new believers ready to attend gatherings, one after another. I had been writing them off based on my own ideas. Hadn't I been harming them by doing this? I'd really done a great evil!

One day, my leader asked me, "Since taking over the watering work, how many newcomers have you let go of because of your irresponsibility? When you were abandoning them, did you seek the truth principles?" At the time, I had no idea what to tell her. Then she sent me a passage of God's words: **"There are many people who follow their own ideas no matter what they do, and consider things in highly simplistic terms, and do not seek the truth, either. There is a total absence of principle, and in their hearts they give no thought to how to act according to what God asks, or in a way that satisfies God, and they know only to mulishly follow their own will. God has no place in such people's hearts. Some people say, 'I only pray to God when I encounter difficulty, but still it doesn't feel like this has any effect—so generally when things happen to me now I don't pray to God, because praying to God is of no use.' God is utterly absent from the hearts of such people. They do not seek the truth no matter what they are doing at ordinary times; they only follow their own ideas. So are there principles to their actions? Definitely not. They see everything in simple terms. Even when people fellowship the truth principles to them, they are not able to accept them, because there have never been any principles to their actions, God has no place in their hearts, and there is no one but them in their hearts. They feel their intentions are good, that they are not committing evil, that they cannot be considered in violation of the truth, they think that acting according to their own intentions should be practicing the truth, that**

**acting thus is submitting to God. In fact, they are not truly seeking or praying to God in this matter, but acting on impulse, according to their own zealous intentions, they are not performing their duty as God asks, they do not have a heart of submission to God, they are absent of this wish. This is the greatest mistake in people's practice. If you believe in God yet He is not in your heart, are you not trying to deceive God? And what effect can such faith in God have? Just what can you gain? And what is the point of such faith in God?"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Part Three). God's words revealed my exact state and behavior. When I gave up on those new believers, I didn't pray or seek the truth, or even discuss it with my leader. I just blindly acted on experience, thinking of some new believers we'd watered in the past who'd skipped gatherings for months and how we'd just let them go after failing to contact them. I thought that we should just do the same thing now when newcomers weren't coming back. I even believed that I had a clear view of which ones weren't truth-seekers and which ones were disbelievers, so I casually wrote them off and abandoned them. Even though I felt uneasy at times, I didn't do any seeking. When my partner brought it up, I didn't take her suggestion seriously and just did whatever I wanted. I treated my ideas like the truth principles, thinking I couldn't be wrong. Wasn't that arrogant and conceited? I thought nothing of other people, and I wasn't holding God in my heart. I was much too willful! I judged whether new believers had genuine faith just by if they came to gatherings or not, thinking that if they didn't show up for a while and I couldn't get hold of them, we could let them go. In fact, that newcomers don't attend gatherings doesn't mean they are disbelievers. Determining which ones are true believers and which are disbelievers requires a real understanding of their situations—they have to be treated differently. Some of the ones who aren't going to gatherings have



reluctantly come along with family members who hope they'd become believers. But they don't even believe in God's existence, don't enjoy reading His words or attending gatherings. Some are pursuing worldly things or fame or evil trends and aren't remotely interested in following God and going to gatherings. They are averse to and resist any kind of fellowship on God's words. These people are averse to the truth by nature, so they're innately disbelievers. If they don't want to attend gatherings, we can let go of them completely. However, some newcomers have good humanity and genuine faith in God, but don't understand the truth or the significance of gatherings because they're just starting out. They think they only need to acknowledge God in their hearts and that it doesn't make a difference if they come to gatherings or not. So they don't think much of it and just come when they feel like it. And some have actual difficulties and are unwilling to come because of conflicts between their work and gathering times. We need to give them loving help and support for their problems, use the truth to resolve their notions and difficulties and get them to understand God's intention to save man. At the same time we should adjust the gathering times to suit them. But I wasn't treating new believers according to their actual situations or being principled in my duty. I didn't understand the truth, I just stubbornly did things my own way, treating some newcomers who weren't coming to gatherings like disbelievers, and carelessly tossing them aside.

God has done a lot of work behind the scenes, made many arrangements and paid an incredible price for every new believer who accepts His work in the last days. Brothers and sisters have patiently and lovingly shared the gospel with them many times. But without even seeking the principles, I'd casually written off some newcomers as people that God wouldn't save. I really was unreasonably arrogant. It wasn't their fault that

they weren't coming to gatherings, it was mine for not knowing what they were facing and not helping and supporting them as I should. I was even using the statement that "God wants the best of people, not just more people" as an excuse to give up on them. But what that really meant was that God's kingdom needs people who have true faith and love the truth, and that God won't save the disbelievers, evil people, and antichrists. But I'd judged all those new believers who skipped gatherings as people that God wouldn't save. I was misinterpreting God's words. I didn't provide any actual fellowship or help to them, or pay a price and fulfill my responsibilities. I also didn't get an understanding of whether they really cared about the truth or not, or if they were true disbelievers, I just blindly wrote them off and abandoned them based on my own ideas. If my leader hadn't pruned me, I don't know how many more newcomers I would have hurt. I saw how hateful my behavior had been. I didn't know the truth principles and hadn't sought them, instead I'd just acted out of my satanic disposition. Those were transgressions! I knew if I didn't repent and change, God would definitely spurn me.

As a church leader, God's intention is for me to water and support these brothers and sisters who are new to the faith, to help resolve their notions and problems so they can learn about His work and put roots down in the true way as soon as possible. But I did whatever I wanted and recklessly committed misdeeds. Not only was I blindly going my own way, but I was also leading others astray. As a result, my brothers and sisters were also arbitrarily abandoning new believers. I was doing evil. Seeing how serious the consequences of this were, I couldn't help but feel scared and angry at myself. Why didn't I pray to God or seek the truth principles at the time? Why didn't I reach out to my leader, but just casually gave up on those who weren't going to gatherings? What led me to act with such

audacity? I prayed to God and then read a passage of God's words: **"If, in your heart, you truly understand the truth, then you will know how to practice the truth and submit to God, and will naturally embark on the path of pursuing the truth. If the path you walk is the right one, and in line with God's intentions, then the work of the Holy Spirit will not leave you—in which case there will be less and less chance of you betraying God. Without the truth, it is easy to do evil, and you will do it despite yourself. For example, if you have an arrogant and conceited disposition, then being told not to oppose God makes no difference, you can't help yourself, it is beyond your control. You would not do it on purpose; you would do it under the domination of your arrogant and conceited nature. Your arrogance and conceit would make you look down on God and see Him as being of no account; they would cause you to exalt yourself, constantly put yourself on display; they would make you scorn others, they would leave no one in your heart but yourself; they would rob you of God's place in your heart, and ultimately cause you to sit in the place of God and demand that people submit to you, and make you venerate your own thoughts, ideas, and notions as the truth. So much evil is done by people under the dominance of their arrogant and conceited nature!"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Only by Pursuing the Truth Can One Achieve a Change in Disposition). I'd read these words plenty of times, but it was only when I compared them with this experience that they really touched me. I hadn't served as a church leader for very long and didn't have any truth reality. There were many truth principles that I didn't understand, yet I still thought really highly of myself, as if I understood everything. With new believers, I just wrote off all the ones who weren't gathering as disbelievers, instead of treating them differently according to their actual situations. I was so self-

righteous that I didn't pray, seek or talk to my leader, or even take my partner's advice. I was incredibly arrogant! In fact, there are lots of truth principles concerning how to treat new believers, like the principles of helping people with love, the principles of treating people fairly, and there are also truths about resolving the notions of newcomers, and so on. If I'd had a bit of a God-fearing heart and hadn't been so arrogant and self-righteous, if I'd really considered these principles, I never would have been so pig-headed and disruptive to our work. I realized that living by my arrogant disposition meant I couldn't help but do evil and resist God. I really hated myself, and felt that I truly deserved to be cursed by God. I swore that I had to seek the truth to resolve my arrogant disposition.

After that, I read two passages of God's word: **"In their work, church leaders and workers must pay attention to two principles: One is to do their work exactly according to the principles stipulated by the work arrangements, never violating those principles and not basing their work on anything that they might imagine or on any of their own ideas. In everything they do, they should show concern for the work of the church, and always put the interests of God's house first. Another thing—and this is most crucial—is that in all things, they must focus on following the Holy Spirit's guidance and do everything in strict keeping with God's words. If they are still capable of going against the Holy Spirit's guidance, or if they stubbornly follow their own ideas and do things according to their own imagination, then their actions will constitute a most serious resistance against God"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Part Three). **"How should you reflect on yourself, and try to know yourself, when you have done something that violates the truth principles and is displeasing to God? When you were about to do that thing, did you pray to Him? Did you ever consider, 'Is**

doing things in this way in line with the truth? How would this matter be viewed by God if it were brought before Him? Would He be happy or irritated if He knew about it? Would He hate or detest it?' You did not seek it out, did you? Even if others reminded you, you would still think that the matter was no big deal, and that it did not run against any principles and was not a sin. As a result, you offended God's disposition and provoked Him to anger, even to the point of His hating you. This is produced by people's rebelliousness. Therefore, you should seek the truth in all things. This is what you must follow. If you can earnestly come before God to pray beforehand, and then seek the truth according to God's words, you will not go wrong. You may have some deviations in your practice of the truth, but this is hard to avoid, and you will be able to practice correctly after you gain some experience. However, if you know how to act in accordance with the truth, yet don't practice it, the problem is your dislike of the truth. Those who do not love the truth will never seek it, no matter what may happen to them. Only those who love the truth have God-fearing hearts, and when things happen that they don't understand, they are able to seek the truth. If you can't grasp God's intentions and don't know how to practice, then you should fellowship with some people who understand the truth. If you can't find those who understand the truth, you should find a few people who have a pure understanding to pray to God together with one mind and one heart, seek from God, await God's time, and wait for God to open a way for you. As long as you all yearn for the truth, seek the truth, and fellowship on the truth together, the time may come when one of you comes up with a good solution. If you all find the solution suitable and a good way, then this may have been due to the enlightenment and illumination of the Holy Spirit. If you

then continue to fellowship together to come up with a more accurate path of practice, it will certainly be in line with the truth principles. In your practice, if you discover your way of practice is still somewhat unsuitable, then you need to quickly correct it. If you err slightly, God will not condemn you, because your intentions in what you do are right, and you are practicing according to the truth. You are simply a little confused about the principles and have made an error in your practice, which is excusable. But when most people do things, they do them on the basis of how they imagine them to be done. They don't use God's words as a basis to contemplate how to practice according to the truth or how to gain God's approval. Instead, they only think about how to benefit themselves, how to make others look up to them, and how to make others admire them. They do things entirely based on their own ideas and purely to satisfy themselves, which is troublesome. Such people will never do things in accordance with the truth, and God will always loathe them. If you are truly someone with conscience and reason, then no matter what happens, you should be able to come before God to pray and seek, be able to seriously examine the motives and adulteration in your actions, be able to determine what is appropriate to do according to God's words and requirements, and repeatedly weigh and contemplate what actions please God, what actions disgust God, and what actions earn God's approval. You must go over these matters time and again in your mind until you clearly understand them. If you know that you have your own motives for doing something, then you must reflect on what your motives are, whether it is to satisfy yourself or to satisfy God, whether it is beneficial to yourself or to God's chosen people, and what consequences it will cause.... If you seek and contemplate more like this in your prayers,

**and ask yourself more questions to seek the truth, then the deviations in your actions will become smaller and smaller. Only those who can seek the truth in this way are people who are considerate of God's intentions and who fear God, because you are seeking in accordance with the requirements of God's words and with a submissive heart, and the conclusions you reach from seeking this way will be in line with the truth principles"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Part Three).

God's words gave me a path of practice. Leaders and workers need to work strictly in accordance with the truth principles and the arrangements of God's house, and always follow the Holy Spirit's guidance. We also need to pray and seek often in our duties, and maintain a God-fearing heart. We should never follow our own ideas and experiences, or our imaginings and notions, just doing whatever we want. Even less should we believe in ourselves blindly—we have to seek the truth principles. When we don't understand something, we can seek and fellowship with our brothers and sisters so that we have a firm grasp on the principles before acting. That's how we have to do our duty to accord with God's intention. This experience really taught me a lesson. If God hadn't set things up and allowed my leader to prune me, I still wouldn't understand how serious the consequences of working based on my own ideas could be. I told myself that from then on, I had to seek the truth and do my duty according to the principles. Later on, two new members stopped coming to gatherings, and I didn't dare follow my arrogant disposition and cavalierly make assumptions and abandon them. After reaching out to understand, help and support one of them many times and fellowshiping about his situation with our leader, we ultimately determined that he was a disbeliever and let him go. But the other was a sister who'd believed in God for less than two years, liked reading God's words and did her best in her duty. However, when she read God's words

about judging and exposing people's corruption, she compared herself to them and saw that she was deeply corrupted. She decided she was a lost cause, and started to give up on herself. The others and I fellowshipped God's words with her so she could see that God's salvation is for all humankind, who has been profoundly corrupted by Satan. We fellowshipped that God understands our difficulties, weaknesses and needs, and that as long as we don't give up our pursuit of the truth, God won't abandon us easily, because He always tries to save people to the greatest extent possible. That sister was moved to tears, and she could feel God's love. We helped and supported her a few times, and now she's gathering regularly again.

This experience really showed me the good intentions and incredible love God has in His salvation of corrupt mankind. At the same time, through the judgment and revelation of God's words, I've gained some understanding of my arrogant disposition and seen the harm and consequences of doing my duty my own way. I've finally had a bit of a God-fearing heart. Now I can do my duty in line with the principles, and this was achieved through God's words. Thank God!



## 47. I Have Seen My Pastor's True Colors

By Nora, the Philippines

When I first became a Christian, our church's Pastor Matias and his wife thought very highly of me. They made me the leader of the Praise Team and a Sunday School teacher and were always really caring toward me. Whenever I had a problem or felt some weakness, they'd pray for me. They were caring toward other church members, too. Whenever someone felt negative or weak they'd fellowship on the Bible to offer support and help them out. I felt like they were both really loving and we were lucky to have them. Deep in my heart, I'd always felt like they were my spiritual parents in faith.

Then in 2018, I met some brothers and sisters from The Church of Almighty God online. After hearing their testimony, I found out that the Lord Jesus had returned, incarnated as Almighty God. He's expressing truths to judge and cleanse mankind in the last days, fulfilling the prophecy in 1 Peter 4:17 that says: **“For the time is come that judgment must begin at the house of God.”** I was thrilled, and my family and I looked into Almighty God's work of the last days together. Through reading Almighty God's words we all became certain that they are the voice of God and that Almighty God is the Lord Jesus returned. We all accepted Almighty God's work of the last days. After that, Pastor Matias came to mind for me. He always told us to keep watch for the Lord's coming, so I figured he'd be overjoyed to hear that the Lord had returned. I decided to tell him the good news.

Once during a gathering, Pastor Matias said, “We're in the last days and the Lord could return at any moment. We have to pray and be watchful.” I was so excited to hear him say this, so I chimed right in,

saying, “I met some brothers and sisters online recently bearing witness that the Lord has returned. I’ve been attending gatherings with them, which have been really enlightening.” His response was, “Online gatherings are great and they can help us understand the Lord’s words better.” Then he just went on with his sermon. I was delighted, thinking, “Pastor Matias really is a seeker of the truth. I have to share God’s gospel of the last days with him soon.” Surprisingly, Pastor Matias and his wife came to my house a few days later. The moment they walked in, Pastor Matias asked me with a grim look on his face, “You mentioned online gatherings. Have you joined another church?” Seeing how displeased he looked left me a little dumbfounded. Before I could respond, my mom said happily, “Yes, Pastor. We’ve been looking into Almighty God’s work of the last days. That’s how we found out that the Lord has returned. He’s expressing lots of truths and doing the work of judgment starting with the house of God.” Pastor Matias responded sternly, “The Lord has returned? Impossible! The Bible clearly prophesies: **‘Behold, He comes with clouds; and every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him’** (Revelation 1:7). The Lord will return on a cloud in the last days for everyone to see. If He’s already returned, why haven’t we seen Him?” My mom said, “There are lots of biblical prophecies of the Lord’s return. Aside from Him coming openly on a cloud, there are also verses about Him coming in secret, like Revelation 16:15, **‘Behold, I come as a thief,’** Revelation 3:3, **‘If therefore you shall not watch, I will come on you as a thief,’** and Matthew 25:6, **‘And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom comes; go you out to meet him.’** Saying He comes like a thief means He returns quietly without anyone knowing about it. If the Lord just came openly on a cloud, then everyone would see Him. How could that be like a thief, and who would need to cry that the

bridegroom has come?” Infuriated, Pastor Matias said, “Doesn’t your claim that the Lord comes in secret contradict the prophecies of Him coming on a cloud? This isn’t in line with the Bible. If we haven’t seen the Lord coming on a cloud, then it proves He hasn’t returned. We won’t believe it!”

It seemed he didn’t really get it, so I said, “Pastor Matias, the prophecies of Him coming in flesh in secret and of Him coming openly on a cloud aren’t actually contradictory. His return happens in two stages. First, He comes secretly in the flesh, expresses truths to judge and cleanse mankind, and makes a group of overcomers before the disasters. Once that’s done, His work in secret comes to a close and then He’ll send disasters, reward good and punish evil. He’ll destroy all enemies of God, all who belong to Satan. He’ll appear openly to all nations and peoples only after the great disasters are over. Those who hear God’s voice and look into His work while He’s here working in secret will all come before God’s throne, accept His judgment in the last days, be cleansed of corruption, and ultimately be brought into God’s kingdom. They are the wise virgins that the Bible prophesied. Those who refuse to hear God’s voice while He’s here working in secret and who even condemn and reject Almighty God are the foolish virgins. They’re the disbelievers, antichrists, and evil people exposed through God’s work of the last days. When God comes openly on a cloud, they’ll see that the Almighty God they opposed is actually the returned Lord Jesus, but their regret will come too late. They’ll be taken by the disasters, and punished as they weep. This will fulfill what the Lord said: **‘Behold, He comes with clouds; and every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him’** (Revelation 1:7). This is how the prophecies of the Lord coming in secret and coming openly will both be fulfilled.” My mom then said earnestly, “Pastor, she’s right. The Bible mentions the Lord returning as

the Son of man a number of times. For example: **‘As the lightning comes out of the east, and shines even to the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be’** (Matthew 24:27). **‘For as the lightning, that lightens out of the one part under heaven, shines to the other part under heaven; so shall also the Son of man be in His day. But first must He suffer many things, and be rejected of this generation’** (Luke 17:24–25). **‘The Son of man’** refers to God incarnate, just like the Lord Jesus was the Son of man. He was born of man and possessed normal humanity. If the Lord returned in His spiritual body or as God’s Spirit, He wouldn’t be called the Son of man. And if the Lord returned as God in His spiritual body, who would dare reject or oppose Him? How would He first **‘suffer many things, and be rejected of this generation’**? The Lord Jesus has already returned as Almighty God incarnate. You should take a look at Almighty God’s words.” As my mom spoke, she got a copy of Almighty God’s words out for the pastor. He not only refused to look at it, but smacked it angrily and yelled, “This is absolutely not the word of God. God’s words are all in the Bible and there are no more anywhere else!” I was shocked to see Pastor Matias acting so out of character, red in the face with anger. He’d always been so kind—he suddenly seemed like a totally different person. I started feeling a little timid, so I quickly said a silent prayer to God asking Him to give me faith and guide me to keep fellowshiping.

After the prayer, I calmed down quite a bit. I said to him very gently, “Pastor Matias, there’s no biblical basis for your claim that all of God’s words are in the Bible and nowhere else. That’s not in line with the facts. It says in the Gospel of John: **‘And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written’** (John 21:25). The Lord Jesus said a lot in the three and a half years He worked

and preached on earth, but what's recorded in the Four Gospels would just take a few hours to say. This shows that there's no way all of the Lord Jesus' words were recorded in the Bible. Besides, there were things that the people who compiled the Bible left out, so some prophets' prophecies didn't make it into the Bible. That includes some of God's words conveyed by the prophet Ezra. That means the statement that there are no words of God outside the Bible simply doesn't stand." My mom also said earnestly, "Not only were some words of God's previous two stages of work left out of the Bible, but there are also the words God will say in the last days! The Lord Jesus prophesied: **'I have yet many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. However, when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth'** (John 16:12–13). It's also prophesied many times in chapters 2 and 3 of Revelation: **'He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches.'** Revelation also mentions the Lamb opening a scroll. These are all prophecies of the Lord uttering more words when He returns. If there couldn't be any words of God outside the Bible, how would these prophecies be fulfilled? Almighty God is doing the work of judgment, expressing all the truths which will cleanse and fully save mankind. He's revealed all the mysteries of His management plan, exposed and judged the truth of man's corruption and the root of man's sin in resisting God. He's given us the path to true repentance and entry into the kingdom of heaven. What was prophesied in Revelation about the Holy Spirit speaking to the churches refers to Almighty God's words; they are the scroll opened by the Lamb. How could these new words be recorded in the Bible in advance? Isn't the claim that none of God's words exist outside the Bible way too dogmatic? God is the Lord of creation and the ever-flowing fount of the living waters. But the work and words of God recorded in the Bible are really limited. We can't delimit God within the scope of the Bible

based on our notions. That would be denying the truth, denying God's own work and words!" This made Pastor Matias really angry, but he couldn't refute it. He just said, "Not allowing you to look into this is for your own good. You're immature in life and could be misled. Confess and repent to the Lord right away!" I quickly responded, "Pastor Matias, we've come to the conclusion that Almighty God is the Lord Jesus returned through earnest seeking and by reading a lot of Almighty God's words. You haven't read His words, so it's normal to have some doubts and notions. The Lord Jesus said: **'Ask, and it shall be given you; seek, and you shall find; knock, and it shall be opened to you'** (Matthew 7:7). As long as you're willing to seek, and read Almighty God's words, your confusions can all be dispelled." No sooner had I finished than his wife asked me for contact information for brothers and sisters from The Church of Almighty God and said she would look into God's work later. Taking her at her word, I gave the contact information to them. They took it and stormed out.

I felt unsettled for quite a while after the two of them left. I'd always thought of them as good, humble people. They'd often told us to keep watch for the Lord's return, but when they heard news of the Lord's return they weren't interested in it at all. They just stubbornly clung to the Bible's words. Why wouldn't they practice what they preached? I was really disappointed and upset, but hoping they'd investigate God's work of the last days, I said a silent prayer for them. I also sent them a link to the gospel movie *Disclose the Mystery About the Bible*, hoping it would get them to let go of their notions, look into Almighty God's work, and welcome the Lord soon. As I eagerly awaited this, something really unexpected happened. They sent me all sorts of rumors slandering The Church of Almighty God to keep me away from it. When this had no effect, they then sent messages questioning and harassing members of The Church of

Almighty God. They also got on Facebook and posted lots of rumors slandering and attacking The Church of Almighty God to mislead others and keep them from investigating the true way. And they didn't stop there. They went from house to house warning brothers and sisters not to have anything to do with me, judging and badmouthing me. A lot of people got the wrong impression of me and kept their distance. Some sent me accusatory messages and some refused to speak with me when we crossed paths. Some wouldn't even answer the door when I went to visit them. This was really upsetting for me. I'd been close with these brothers and sisters in the past, but now they avoided me and spurned me, taken in by the pastor's lies. I could hardly believe this was all done by the pastor I'd once thought so highly of. I was suffering and felt very weak inside. I couldn't figure it out. I hadn't done anything wrong. I'd just accepted God's work of the last days. Why would the pastor treat me that way?

When a sister from The Church of Almighty God found out about it, she offered me help and support and read a passage of God's words for me: **"In every step of work that God does within people, externally it appears to be interactions between people, as if born of human arrangements or from human disturbance. But behind the scenes, every step of work, and everything that happens, is a wager made by Satan before God, and requires people to stand firm in their testimony to God. Take when Job was tried, for example: Behind the scenes, Satan was making a bet with God, and what happened to Job was the deeds of men and the disturbance of men. Behind every step of work that God does in you is Satan's wager with God—behind it all is a battle"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Only Loving God Is Truly Believing in God). Then I understood that the pastor being disruptive and the other church members isolating me were all Satan's temptations. Satan

wanted me to give up the true way, betray God, and lose His salvation of the last days. Satan is so despicable! I thought, “Since I’m already certain that Almighty God is the Lord Jesus returned, no matter what difficulties I may face I have to unswervingly follow Him until the end.” Then the sister shared this fellowship: “God uses these situations to teach us discernment of others. The approach people take to the Lord’s coming shows their attitude toward the truth and God, and reveals their essence.” Then she read another passage of God’s words: **“Do you wish to know the root of why the Pharisees opposed Jesus? Do you wish to know the essence of the Pharisees? They were full of fantasies about the Messiah. What is more, they believed only that the Messiah would come, yet did not pursue the life truth. And so, even today they still await the Messiah, for they have no knowledge of the way of life, and do not know what the way of truth is. How, say you, could such foolish, stubborn and ignorant people gain God’s blessing? How could they behold the Messiah? They opposed Jesus because they did not know the direction of the Holy Spirit’s work, because they did not know the way of truth spoken by Jesus, and, furthermore, because they did not understand the Messiah. And since they had never seen the Messiah and had never been in the company of the Messiah, they made the mistake of clinging to the mere name of the Messiah while opposing the essence of the Messiah by any means possible. These Pharisees in essence were stubborn, arrogant, and did not obey the truth. The principle of their belief in God was: No matter how profound Your preaching, no matter how high Your authority, You are not Christ unless You are called the Messiah. Is this belief not preposterous and ridiculous?”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. By the Time You Behold the Spiritual Body of Jesus, God Will Have Made Heaven and Earth Anew). After that, she shared more fellowship in light



of these words from God that shed some light on the behavior of the pastors. I'd always thought that since they knew the Bible well, had worked hard to serve the Lord for years, were loving toward the congregation, and were always telling us to be watchful for the Lord's return, that meant they loved the truth and longed for the Lord's coming. But reality showed me that it wasn't at all like I had thought. Their humble, loving appearance was just a facade used to fool and mislead people, and they were no different from the hypocritical Pharisees. The Pharisees also appeared really devout. They expounded the Scriptures in the synagogues every day, and prayed on the street corners so others would see them doing it. They were all waiting for the Messiah to come, but when the Lord Jesus did appear to do His work, expressing truths and showing so many miracles and wonders, which all clearly came from God, the Pharisees didn't want to seek about it. They stubbornly upheld the scriptural laws and used the words of Scripture to condemn God's work. They helped get the Lord Jesus crucified and were punished by God. The pastors from our church were exactly the same. They appeared to be humbly serving the Lord and waiting for His return, but knowing full well that Almighty God was expressing the truth and doing the work of judgment, they still didn't look into it at all. They just clung to their own notions and the literal word of the Bible, opposing and condemning God's new work. They said if He didn't come on a cloud, then He wasn't the Lord Jesus, anything not written in the Bible couldn't be God's work, and so on. They did everything they could to keep others from investigating and accepting the true way. They weren't genuinely longing for the Lord's coming at all, but were modern-day Pharisees who hated the truth, and hated God's appearance and work. It reminded me of the Lord Jesus condemning the Pharisees, saying: **“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you are like to white washed sepulchers,**

**which indeed appear beautiful outward, but are within full of dead men's bones, and of all uncleanness. Even so you also outwardly appear righteous to men, but within you are full of hypocrisy and iniquity"** (Matthew 23:27–28). Understanding all of this gave me some discernment over the way the clergy acted. But what happened next showed me their true colors even more clearly.

One afternoon, Elder Arlo and two sisters from my former church came by my house and just stared at me coldly without saying a word. Then Elder Arlo got out his phone, dialed a number, and handed it to me. When I took it, I heard Pastor Matias angrily saying all sorts of foul things. Then he warned me, "You're forbidden to have contact with our church members and to spread Almighty God's gospel in our church. Don't steal my sheep!" I was incensed and told him, "Why shouldn't I share with them the wonderful news of the Lord's return? Why are you always trying to stop people from seeking the true way? They are all God's sheep. Why won't you let them hear God's voice?" After hanging up, Elder Arlo and the others gave me a further talking to and then took off. The pastor kept bothering my family after that and even openly smeared our names in the church. My family members turned weak and negative, unable to bear the harassment. The pastor's evil deeds made me so angry. I read more of Almighty God's words: **"There are those who read the Bible in grand churches and recite it all day long, yet not one among them understands the purpose of God's work. Not one among them is able to know God; still less can any one among them accord with God's intentions. They are all worthless, vile people, each standing on high to lecture God. They willfully oppose God even as they carry His banner. Claiming faith in God, still they eat the flesh and drink the blood of man. All such people are devils that devour the soul of man, head**

**demons that deliberately disturb those trying to step onto the right path, and stumbling blocks impeding those who seek God. They may appear of ‘sound constitution,’ but how are their followers to know that they are none other than antichrists who lead people to stand against God? How are their followers to know that they are living devils dedicated to the devouring of human souls?”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The

Appearance and Work of God. All People Who Do Not Know God Are People Who Oppose God).

Almighty God’s words gave me greater clarity on the true colors of the clergy from the religious world—they resist God. They claim to be protecting God’s flock by not letting us share God’s kingdom gospel, but in fact, they’re afraid everyone would follow Almighty God and no one would listen to them anymore. Then they’d lose their status. That’s why they do everything they can to prevent or disrupt believers from investigating the true way. It made me think of the Lord Jesus’ words: **“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you shut up the kingdom of heaven against men: for you neither go in yourselves, neither suffer you them that are entering to go in”** (Matthew 23:13). **“Woe to you, scribes and Pharisees, hypocrites! For you compass sea and land to make one proselyte, and when he is made, you make him twofold more the child of hell than yourselves”** (Matthew 23:15). Not only do the clergy refuse to seek the true way themselves, but they do everything to smear and condemn Almighty God’s work of the last days and mislead believers. A lot of people who don’t know the facts go along with them in resisting and condemning Almighty God. Aren’t they turning those people into sons of hell just like them, so they’ll be punished together? They really are malicious to the core. Clergy in the religious world hate the truth. They oppose and condemn God’s work of the last days and shamelessly corral God’s sheep in their own pens, fighting with God over His chosen people. They’re just the same

as the Pharisees the Lord Jesus cursed 2,000 years ago. They are the evil servants, the antichrists exposed by God in His work of the last days! I saw clearly their essence of opposing God and hating the truth. I resolved to confidently follow Almighty God no matter how they tried to stand in the way! Everyone else in my family also gained discernment by reading Almighty God's words and didn't feel so constrained by the clergy anymore.

Thinking back on that time when the clergy kept harassing and badmouthing me, though I did suffer a bit, it gave me discernment over them. I saw their true colors—they hate the truth and oppose God. I'll never be misled or constrained by them again. I also learned that if we pray to God and lean on Him, He will use His words to guide us in understanding the truth and triumphing over Satan's temptations. My faith in God grew thanks to that experience. Thanks be to Almighty God!

## 48. Reflections After Getting Lost

By Xinzhi, China

One day in August 2019, my leader sent a letter asking me to pick up a sister from out of town. I saw that the sister's home address was within the area of the neighboring church. I thought, "Why is she being transferred to our church? Why not go to the closer one?" But on second thought, our church needed extra hands for all kinds of work, so I decided to pick her up and see. No matter what duty she would be able to do, we could use the extra help. Then I saw the letter said the sister's name was Zhu Yun, and I suddenly remembered, "I met Sister Zhu Yun a few years ago. She's in her forties and has a good understanding of the truth. If it's her, she could even become a leader or worker in our church. This would give me an extra helper." This thought made me very happy. I no longer cared that she lived far away, I just wanted to bring her into the church right away!

I used the address on the letter to find Zhu Yun's house, and knocked on the door, but the person who opened it looked very old. It wasn't the Zhu Yun I knew. I quickly said, "Sorry, I knocked on the wrong door!" I turned around to leave, but she followed me and asked eagerly, "Who are you looking for?" I said I was looking for Zhu Yun. She quickly said, "That's me!" I followed her into the house. As we talked, I learned she was arrested by the CCP and spent more than three years in prison. The police were still monitoring her after her release, so she couldn't attend gatherings in her hometown. She had no choice but to come to her son's house so that she could resume church life. After learning about her situation, my heart sank. I thought, "If only this was the Zhu Yun I knew. If she joined our church, I would have a great helper. But this Zhu Yun is being monitored by the police. That means she can't do any duty. The church is already short on

watering staff, and now someone needs to gather with her one-on-one. If the police also target the brothers and sisters in contact with her, the losses will be terrible! No, she can't come into our church. When I go back, I will write to the leader and ask her to transfer Zhu Yun to the church nearby." Having learned about her situation, I got ready to leave. I didn't ask her what problems or difficulties she had. Zhu Yun urgently asked me, "When are you coming back?" I said perfunctorily, "Just wait here. I'll get back to you after I discuss some things."

On the way back, I lamented to myself as I walked, "The leader doesn't know what she's doing. Zhu Yun is so close to the neighboring church. Why didn't someone from that church pick her up? It's such a long way for us. In the future, we'll waste so much time going to gather with her...." I grumbled in my heart as I continued to walk north, and as I went, I realized I was lost. When I asked for directions, I found out I had gone the opposite direction, out of the town. I was really confused, "I've walked down this road before. How did I get lost?" At the time, I didn't think too much about it. When I got home, I wrote a letter suggesting the leader transfer Zhu Yun to the church nearby.

In the days after I sent the letter, I always felt uneasy, as if something was wrong. I couldn't calm myself when I read God's word, nor focus on sermons or fellowship. I realized I might have done something that was against God's intention, so I quickly prayed to God, asking Him to enlighten and guide me to know myself. After praying, I suddenly remembered getting lost the other day. I realized that when it came to admitting Zhu Yun into the church, all I cared about was my own interests. If it was good for me, I would do it, but if it wasn't, I refused and complained. I didn't care about the life of my sister at all. It was only after reading a few passages of God's words, that I gained some understanding of

my problem. God's words say: **"Matters concerning a person's interests reveal them most of all. Interests are intimately linked to every person's life, and everything a person comes into contact with every single day involves their interests. For example, when you say something or talk about a matter, what interests are involved? When two people discuss some issue, it is a matter of who is articulate and who isn't articulate, who is highly regarded by other people and who is looked down upon by other people.... What other aspects do the interests that people pursue also involve? When going about their business, people constantly weigh things up, calculate, and ponder in their minds, racking their brains to think what actions are in their interest, what actions aren't in their interest, what actions can further their interests, what actions at the very least don't harm their interests, and what actions can earn them the most glory and the greatest material gains, and turn them into the biggest beneficiary. These are the two interests that people fight for whenever issues befall them"** (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Nine (Part One)). **"Until people have experienced God's work and understood the truth, it is Satan's nature that takes charge and dominates them from within. What, specifically, does that nature entail? For example, why are you selfish? Why do you protect your own position? Why do you have such strong feelings? Why do you enjoy those unrighteous things? Why do you like those evils? What is the basis for your fondness for such things? Where do these things come from? Why are you so happy to accept them? By now, you have all come to understand that the main reason behind all these things is that Satan's poison is within man. So what is Satan's poison? How can it be expressed? For example, if you ask, 'How should people live? What should people live for?' people will answer, 'Every man for**

**himself and the devil take the hindmost.’ This single phrase expresses the very root of the problem. Satan’s philosophy and logic have become people’s lives. No matter what people pursue, they do so for themselves—and so they live only for themselves. ‘Every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost’—this is the life philosophy of man, and it also represents human nature. These words have already become the nature of corrupt mankind and they are the true portrait of corrupt mankind’s satanic nature. This satanic nature has already become the basis for corrupt mankind’s existence. For several thousand years, corrupt mankind has lived by this venom of Satan, right up to the present day”** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. How to Walk the Path of Peter). God’s word revealed my state. I saw that I was selfish and despicable. In everything, I was thinking of my own interests and was wanting to find ways to maximize the benefit to me. I didn’t think at all about my brothers and sisters, let alone the work of the church. When the leader asked me to pick up Sister Zhu Yun, I thought she could do work for the church, and I would have another helper to lighten my load and make my work more effective, which would make me look better, so I couldn’t wait to welcome her into our church. But when I saw she wasn’t the sister I knew, and that she was a security risk, I was conscious that not only would she not be able to do a duty, someone would need to gather with her one-on-one. I thought that not only would she not improve our work productivity or make me look good, but she might pose a risk to our safety. I was against it, and complained that the leader’s arrangement was unreasonable, so I hastily tried to pawn her off to a neighboring church. I saw that living by the satanic poison of “Every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost” made me more and more selfish and despicable. I only had my own interests at heart, and all I cared about was myself. God



sees what's in our hearts. How could God not detest my thoughts? When I thought about how Sister Zhu Yun had been transferred to the neighboring church, I felt remorseful, and I knew that going forward, I had to practice according to God's word, and that I could no longer consider my own interests.

After a while, I received another letter from my leader. Some brothers and sisters were on the run from the CCP, and we needed to arrange for them to come to our church. Reading the letter, I thought to myself, "This time, I can no longer consider my own interests. Regardless of whether they can perform duties, I am ready to accept them so that they can have a church life." So I went to the addresses my leader gave me, welcomed them into our church, and made the necessary arrangements. After practicing like this, I felt very peaceful and at ease.

Later, the police were watching me too, so I was a security risk and couldn't have contact with others. I couldn't attend gatherings, and couldn't perform my duties. That was a difficult time for me. I often missed the days when I could gather with my brothers and sisters and perform my duties. I looked forward to seeing my brothers and sisters again, fellowshiping on the truth together, and speaking what was in my heart. My longing for church life and my brothers and sisters tormented me. Only then did I understand how the brothers and sisters hunted by the CCP felt when they couldn't have a church life or have contact with their brothers and sisters. I thought of Sister Zhu Yun, who I'd passed off to the neighboring church. At the time, I only thought that since she couldn't perform duties, she'd be of no help to the church's work. But I gave no thought to how much torment and pain she must be in, given that she had been imprisoned by the CCP for over three years, and was still under surveillance after her release, and couldn't contact her brothers and sisters or live a church life. In order to

attend gatherings, she was obliged to come to us from her hometown. She did this to have contact with brothers and sisters, but I turned her away without even a word of comfort or an ounce of sympathy. The more I thought about it, the more guilty I felt. Why was I so cold and heartless? One day, I read words from God that revealed antichrists, which helped me see my problem more clearly. God's words say: **"The primary manifestation of the antichrists' insidiousness and ruthlessness is that there is a particularly clear aim to everything they do. The first thing they think about is their own interests; and their methods are despicable, crude, sordid, base, and shady. There is no sincerity in the way they do things, and in the way they treat people and the principles by which they treat them. The way they treat people is to take advantage of them and toy with them, and when people are no longer of useful value to them, they toss them away. If you have useful value to them, they pretend to care about you: 'How have you been? Have you had any difficulties? I can help you solve your difficulties. Tell me if you have any problems. I'm here for you. How lucky we are to have such a good relationship!' They seem so attentive. Yet if a day comes when you no longer have any useful value to them, they will abandon you, they will toss you to one side and ignore you, as if they'd never even met you before. When you really do have a problem and go looking for them for help, their attitude suddenly changes, their words are no longer as nice-sounding as when they first promised to help you—and why is this? It is because you have no useful value to them. Consequently, they stop paying any attention to you. And that's not all: If they find out you have done something wrong or find something they can use as leverage, they become coldly cynical toward you, and may even condemn you. What do you think of this method? Is it a**

**manifestation of kindness and sincerity? When antichrists manifest this kind of insidiousness and ruthlessness in their behavior toward others, is there any trace of humanity involved? Do they have the slightest sincerity toward people? Absolutely not. Everything they do is for their own profit, pride, and reputation, to give themselves status and renown among others. Of everyone they meet, if they can take advantage of them, they will. Those they can't take advantage of, they disdain and pay no heed to; even if you take it upon yourself to approach them, they ignore you, and don't even look at you. But if a day comes when they need you, their attitude toward you suddenly changes, and they become very attentive and amiable, which baffles you. Why has their attitude toward you changed? (Because you now have useful value to them.) That's right: When they see that you have useful value, their attitude changes"** (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Excursus Four: Summarizing the Character of Antichrists and Their Disposition Essence (Part One)). When I saw what God's word revealed, I felt miserable and guilty. My actions and deeds were the same as those of an antichrist. I had a motive in every situation, and only considered my own interests. I always calculated and used people in my interactions. I had no love for my brothers and sisters, no honesty or kindness. Sister Zhu Yun had been under CCP surveillance for so long and couldn't have a church life. I should have understood her situation, and supported and helped her with love, arranging for her to attend gatherings and perform what duties she could as soon as possible. But I was concerned about the security risk she posed. I thought accepting her into the church would do nothing to help the church's work, and we'd have to expend further energy and pay a price to help her. At worst, she'd compromise the other brothers' and sisters' safety, which would affect church work. So, I didn't care at all whether she could have a church life or not, and I didn't

ask her a single question about her state or difficulties. I only wanted to get rid of her, not admit her into the church. I was indifferent and selfish. I couldn't help but ask myself, "I couldn't think about my sister in this small matter. I have no love or compassion. So how could the help I offered my brothers and sisters before have been sincere?" Through reflection, I found that many times, I helped my brothers and sisters because I was the church leader. I thought that by giving them proper support and making sure everyone's state was normal, I could achieve results in my duty and thereby ensure I presented a good image. Only now did I realize I wasn't considerate of God's intentions, and that I wasn't fulfilling my responsibility as a leader. Instead, I was protecting my reputation and status. Outwardly, I was performing my duty, but actually, I was looking after my personal interests under the guise of doing my duty, and I used others as stepping-stones in my pursuit of reputation and status. What I did was disgusting to God, and I was walking the path of resistance to God. If I hadn't experienced the pain of missing out on church life, I never would have known the pain and suffering my brothers and sisters had had without gatherings and church life. And I never would have recognized my sinister and vicious antichrist disposition.

I read another passage from God's word: **"The problem with people pursuing their own interests is that the goals they pursue are the goals of Satan—they are goals that are wicked and unjust. When people pursue personal interests such as fame, gain, and status, they unwittingly become a tool of Satan, they become an outlet for Satan, and, moreover, they become an embodiment of Satan. They play a negative role in the church; toward the work of the church, and toward the normal church life and normal pursuit of God's chosen people, the effect they have is to disturb and impair; they have an adverse and**

**negative effect”** (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Nine (Part One)). This revelation from God’s words made me realize that if we do our duty without practicing the truth, and safeguard our reputation and status, no matter how big a price we pay, we will always play a negative role in the church and be an outlet for Satan. We will only cause disruption and disturbance to the work of the church and damage the life entry of our brothers and sisters. I thought of Sister Zhu Yun being forced to come to us from her hometown just to partake in church life. She sincerely believed in God and longed for God’s word. If I had even a smidge of humanity, I wouldn’t have treated her like that. I was a church leader, but when Sister Zhu Yun was in trouble, I was unable to help her, I indifferently and ruthlessly tried to pass her off to another church. The more I thought about what I did, the more I hated myself. I felt I owed my sister, and more so I owed God. I came before God and prayed, “God! I only consider my own interests when I do things, and have no love for my brothers and sisters. I am so selfish and vicious! God! I want to repent....”

Later, I read another passage of God’s word. I saw God’s selfless provision and care for humankind, and I felt even more ashamed of my selfishness and viciousness. God’s words say: **“No matter how much of God’s word you have heard, how much of the truth you are able to accept and have understood, how much reality you have lived out, or how many results you have obtained, there is a fact you must understand: The truth, the way, and the life of God are bestowed freely on each and every person, and this is fair to everyone. God will never play favorites with one person over another because of how long they have believed in God or how much they have suffered, and He will never favor or bless a person because they have believed in Him for a long time or because they have suffered a lot. Nor will God treat**

anyone differently because of their age, their appearance, their gender, their family background, and so on. Every person obtains the same things from God. He doesn't allow anyone to obtain less, or anyone to obtain more. God is fair and reasonable to each and every person. He gives people exactly what they need, when they need it, not letting them go hungry, cold or thirsty, and He satisfies all the needs of man's heart. When God does these things, what does God require of people? God bestows these things on people, so does God have any selfish motives? (No.) God has no selfish motives at all. God's words and work are all for the sake of humankind, and are meant to solve all of people's hardships and difficulties, so that they can obtain the real life from Him. This is a fact" (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Man Is the Greatest Beneficiary of God's Management Plan). God selflessly provides for everyone with true faith. He has paid a painstaking price for every one of us and never expects anything in return, only hoping that we pursue the truth, change our dispositions, and live out true human likeness. But my treatment of my brothers and sisters was based on whether they were useful. If they were useful, I was willing to pay any price. If not, I'd pay them no heed. I didn't want to bother if there was no benefit. The Lord Jesus said: **"Truly I say to you, Inasmuch as you have done it to one of the least of these My brothers, you have done it to Me"** (Matthew 25:40). It's true. Even the least conspicuous brothers and sisters in the church should be offered help, as long as they genuinely believe in God, and are not evil people, antichrists, or disbelievers. To be able to help them with love is to be considerate of God's intention, and has God's approval. Especially for those brothers and sisters hunted and wanted by the CCP, who can't return home, we need to treat them well and make sure they're safe. This is even more of a good deed. A person's attitude toward such brothers and sisters shows their

humanity. I felt a deep sense of regret. If I had another chance to do my duty, I could no longer be so selfish and despicable, or only consider my own interests when interacting with my brothers and sisters. I had to do my best to help my brothers and sisters, and be someone who possesses humanity and reason.

Several months later, I finally started another duty. My leader arranged for me to support a sister who was a security risk. I thought, “After all I went through, I finally have a duty. If I have contact with this sister, what will happen if I am implicated?” At this point, I realized I wasn’t in the right state, and I hurriedly prayed to God that I would rebel against myself, saying I wanted to do my best to help and support my sister. By gathering and fellowshipping on God’s word with her, her negative state gradually turned around, and she wanted to write an article testifying to God. When I did my utmost to help my sister, I felt very peaceful.

In the past, I always felt I had good humanity, that I could withstand hardship in my duty, and that I had love for my brothers and sisters. Through what the facts showed and the judgment and revelation of God’s word, I finally saw that I only sought to gain. I was selfish and indifferent. I was corrupted by Satan to the point of lacking all human likeness! God’s word made me understand how to treat my brothers and sisters with humanity and reason. It helped me get along with others without always seeking my own interests, and be sincere in supporting and helping my brothers and sisters. Thanks be to God!

## **49. A Proper Attitude Toward One's Duty**

By Melanie, the Philippines

I used to water newcomers in the church, but because my caliber was rather lacking, there were many truths I couldn't fellowship on clearly, and I couldn't resolve newcomers' problems. Besides, I was always protecting my image and status. When there were things I was unclear on, I was embarrassed to seek out others for help. As a result, I didn't do a good job watering newcomers and I was dismissed because of it. The leader then arranged for me to do general affairs work. I was really upset when faced with this adjustment in duty. I just couldn't accept it, especially when I saw more people accepting God's work of the last days, and urgently requiring watering. Having my duty changed just then made me wonder if I had been exposed. I worried what the others would think of me when they found out, that they'd think I lacked caliber and could only do drudge work and odd jobs. I was watering new believers along with others at first, but now that I was handling general affairs, just little chores, what was the point in that sort of duty? No matter how well I did, I'd just be a laborer and end up being eliminated. The more I thought about it, the more upset I became. I wasn't completing my tasks well, but was content to just go through the motions without putting my heart into them. Sometimes there were a lot of things to do in the evening, but I'd start nodding off really early. Once, a sister in charge of watering work sent me a message, asking me to help put together some work documents from before. I felt really resistant when I read that. I wasn't doing watering work anymore, why would she ask me to do that? I couldn't refuse, though, so I reluctantly agreed to do it. The next day another watering sister asked me to help with something. I was really reluctant, thinking, "General affairs really are just odd jobs, and anyone can



tell me what to do. It isn't really my job, so why would she have me help?" I was afraid she'd think I wasn't supporting the church's work if I refused. Hands tied, I told her I would do it.

For a few days, I didn't reflect on myself at all. I wasn't able to accept the duty change from God and was resistant to the leader, feeling she was making things hard for me. I said to a sister I partnered with before, sort of on purpose, "I never had an idle moment in my watering work and I did everything I was supposed to. The leader never helped me when problems came up, but she dismissed me at the drop of a hat. Well, whatever! Since I was dismissed, there must be a lesson in it for me." After hearing that, the sister also felt like the leader wasn't fair with me. At the time, I felt really wronged. Why was I assigned to handle general affairs? Was I only capable of doing odd jobs? Was I not worth cultivating? I felt like I'd just be useless from then on, and even if I kept my faith till the end, I'd be eliminated. These thoughts made me more and more miserable. I realized my state wasn't right so I immediately came before God in prayer and said, "God, what's wrong with me? This is a duty too, so why am I this unsatisfied with handling general affairs? God, please enlighten and guide me to understand myself and stop living in corruption." After praying I thought of God's words about antichrists' attitude toward a change in duty. God's words say: **"What duty is appropriate to you should be based on your own strengths. If sometimes the duty arranged for you by the church is not something you are good at or is not something you wish to do, you can raise the issue and resolve it through communication. But if you can perform the duty, and it is a duty you should perform, and you don't want to do it just because you fear suffering, then there is a problem with you. If you are willing to obey and can rebel against your flesh, then you can be said to be relatively reasonable. However, if you always**

try to calculate which duties are more prestigious, and you assume certain duties will make others look down on you, this proves you have a corrupt disposition. Why are you so prejudiced in your understanding of duties? Could it be that you can perform a duty well if it is one you choose based on your own ideas? That isn't necessarily true. What matters most here is resolving your corrupt disposition, and if you don't, you won't be able to perform your duty well, even if it's one you enjoy. Some people perform their duties without principles, and their performance of their duty is always based on their own preferences, so they are never able to resolve difficulties, they always muddle through every duty they perform, and eventually they are eliminated. Can people like this be saved? ... Evil people and antichrists never have the correct attitude in their duties. What do they think when they are transferred? 'Do you think I'm just a service-doer? When you use me, you make me render service for you, and when you're done with me, you just send me away. Well, I won't render service like that! I want to be a leader or worker, because that's the only respectable job around here. If you won't let me be a leader or worker and you still want me to toil, you can just forget about it!' What kind of attitude is this? Are they submitting? On what basis do they approach being transferred in their duty? On the basis of impetuosity, their own ideas, and their corrupt disposition, right? And what are the consequences of approaching it this way? First of all, will they be able to be loyal and sincere in their next duty? No, they won't. Will they have a positive attitude? What sort of state will they be in? (A state of despondency.) What is the essence of despondency? It's antagonism. And what is the ultimate result of an antagonistic and despondent mood? Can someone who feels that way do their duty well?

**(No.) If someone is always negative and antagonistic, are they fit to do a duty? No matter what duty they do, they can't do it well. This is a vicious cycle, and will not end well. Why is that? Such people are not on a good path; they do not seek the truth, they are not submissive, and they cannot properly understand the house of God's attitude and approach toward them. This is trouble, is it not? It is a perfectly appropriate change in duty, but antichrists say it's being done to torment them, that they are not being treated like a human being, that the house of God lacks love, that they are being treated like a machine, called upon when they're needed, then kicked aside when they're not. Isn't that a twisted argument? Does someone who says that sort of thing have a conscience or reason? They have no humanity! They distort a perfectly proper matter; they twist a totally appropriate practice into something negative—is this not the wickedness of an antichrist? Can someone who is this wicked understand the truth? Absolutely not. This is an antichrist's problem; whatever happens to them, they will think about it in a twisted way. Why do they think in a twisted way? Because their nature essence is so wicked. An antichrist's nature essence is primarily wicked, followed by their viciousness, and these are their main characteristics. Antichrists' wicked nature prevents them from correctly comprehending anything, and instead they distort everything, they go to extremes, they split hairs, and they cannot handle things properly or seek the truth. Next, they actively fight back and seek revenge, even spreading notions and venting negativity, inciting and roping in others to disturb the church's work. They secretly spread around some complaints, judge how people are treated by God's house, some of its administrative rules, how certain leaders do things, and condemn these leaders. What sort of disposition**

**is this? It is vicious”** (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Twelve: They Want to Withdraw When They Have No Status and No Hope of Gaining Blessings). I saw from God’s words that in the face of anything, antichrists can’t properly understand God’s intentions, but always take things wrong. They approach a simple change in duty as if they’re being demoted, thinking that things are being made difficult for them. They get negative and resistant, and might abandon their duty at any time, disregarding the work of the church. Antichrists have such an evil nature! I saw I was acting the exact same way. I should have reflected on how I’d failed after being dismissed, and treasured this chance at a new duty. But I didn’t even reflect. I felt like it was the leader being hard on me, that handling general affairs was degrading and embarrassing, that I was doing odd jobs and being a laborer, and wasn’t worth cultivating. I simply couldn’t submit to it, but even felt I’d suffered a great wrong, and was very resistant to this duty. I was always slacking off, going through the motions, just drifting along. I was pitting myself against God and using this kind of negativity to go up against God. I didn’t want to cooperate when the watering sisters came to me for help, but was full of grievances. I thought they were ordering me around, making me toil and do odd jobs. I wanted to vent my feelings of being wronged, so I aired my grievances to my former partner, complaining about the leader. That affected her and she ended up feeling biased against the leader. That change in duty fully exposed me. I did my duty entirely based on personal preference, only wanting to do a duty that made me look good. With a lower status, I felt others wouldn’t look up to me and I had no hope of blessings, so I was negative and dragged my feet, going up against God, even venting my anger in my duty. I spread my own biases and notions, and got another person to fight for me. How was that any different from an antichrist? I really didn’t have any normal humanity or reason!

Then I read some of God's words: "Some people do not perform their duties properly, they are always perfunctory, causing disruptions or disturbances, and ultimately, they are replaced. They are not, however, expelled from the church, which is them being given a chance to repent. Everyone has corrupt dispositions, and everyone has times when they are muddled or confused, times when they are of small stature. The aim of giving you a chance is so that you can turn all this around. And how can you turn it around? You must reflect on and come to know your past mistakes; don't make excuses, and don't go about spreading notions. If you misunderstand God and blithely pass on these misunderstandings to others, so that they, too, misinterpret God with you, and if you have notions and go around spreading them, so that everyone has notions with you, and tries to reason with God alongside you, is this not rabble-rousing? Is this not opposing God? And can anything good come from opposing God? Can you still be saved? You hope that God will save you, yet you refuse to accept His work, and you resist and oppose God, so will God still save you? Forget these hopes. When you made a mistake, God did not hold you accountable, nor did He eliminate you because of this single error. God's house gave you a chance, and allowed you to continue to perform a duty, and to repent, which is the opportunity given to you by God; if you have conscience and reason, you should treasure this. Some people are always perfunctory when they perform their duties, and they are replaced; some are transferred. Does this mean they have been eliminated? That is not what God has said; you still have a chance. So what should you do? You should reflect on and come to know yourself, and attain true repentance; this is the path. But that is not what some people do. They fight back, and go all about saying, 'I wasn't allowed

**to perform this duty because I said the wrong thing and offended someone.’ They don’t look for the problem in themselves, they don’t reflect, they don’t seek the truth, they don’t submit to the arrangements and orchestrations of God, and they oppose God by spreading notions. Have they not become Satan? When you do the things that Satan does, you are no longer a follower of God. You have become an enemy of God—could God save His enemy? No. God saves people with corrupt dispositions, real people—not devils, not His enemies. When you go against God, and complain about God, and misinterpret God, and pass judgment on God, spreading notions about God, then you are wholly against God; you are raising an outcry against God”** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Only by Seeking the Truth Principles Can One Perform One’s Duty Well). I was profoundly stirred by God’s words. Though I’d been dismissed, the church still gave me a chance to perform a duty. It didn’t say I couldn’t pursue the truth, that I’d be eliminated. I’d been arranged to take on another duty, which gave me a chance to really self-reflect and understand myself. But not understanding God’s intention, I thought that being dismissed was losing status and face. I was negative and resistant. I was so rebellious and unreasonable! When I was watering new believers, since I didn’t have good caliber, I couldn’t fellowship on the truth clearly, and the newcomers’ questions weren’t resolved in time. Fearing others would look down on me, I always put on an act and didn’t open up and seek help about difficulties I encountered. The leader fellowshiped with me on principles and methods for that duty, but I was content to just know about them, and afterward I didn’t think about how to practice and apply them. So, I didn’t grasp a lot of principles after plenty of fellowship and my watering work never had good results. I not only had poor caliber, but I was extremely arrogant and didn’t have a will to

seek the truth. I wasn't really improving my skills, and there was no progress in my work. So I needed to be transferred to a different duty. But I wouldn't acknowledge my corruption and faults. I treated my transferal with indignance and refused to accept it. I even misunderstood that God was exposing me, making me look bad, that He was going to eliminate me. That was absurd and completely unreasonable of me. With my poor caliber and my lack of accomplishments in watering newcomers, I often felt negative. If I'd kept on doing that duty, it not only would have hurt my own life, but also held up the work of the church. Based on my caliber and strengths, the leader gave me a duty I could do. That was following principle, and being responsible toward my life. But I didn't know what was good for me. I didn't self-reflect to know myself, but made a counterattack, judging the leader behind her back, spreading negativity. From the outside, it looked like I was just finding fault with her, but in fact I was opposing God, going up against Him. Being exposed this way, I saw that I didn't just lack caliber, but I also had a seriously corrupt disposition. If I didn't submit like I should and earnestly do my duty, I'd be exposed and eliminated!

As I reflected, I also discovered a fallacious view I held. I thought duties had different ranks, that there were lowly and lofty ones, and only doing leadership or watering work was a real duty, while the work of general affairs didn't count as a duty. I thought of it as low-grade work, that doing such duties was just laboring, and that I'd end up being eliminated after my laboring. So, hearing I was being assigned to handle general affairs made me feel inferior, and treated like a machine. I was really resistant to it and didn't even have the drive to do my duty. But in the church, all duties are for God's management plan of saving mankind. Whether it's being a leader, a waterer, or doing general affairs work, it's all doing a duty, and everyone needs to cooperate well. It's just like a machine, every single part

has its purpose, so there's no great or small, high or low, noble or base in duties, just different functions. No matter what duty they're doing, everyone has lessons to learn, and truth principles they should practice and enter into. As long as we pursue the truth, we can all be saved by God. But I was always thinking about things wrong. I thought that handling general affairs was just labor and odd jobs. I applied that distorted perspective to my duty being changed and misunderstood God's intention. That's really disgusting and odious to God. That reminded me of some of God's words: **"God's wish is for every person to be made perfect, to be ultimately gained by Him, to be completely cleansed by Him, and to become people He loves. No matter whether I say you are backward or of poor caliber, this is all fact. My saying this does not prove that I intend to forsake you, that I have lost hope in you, much less that I am unwilling to save you. Today I have come to do the work of your salvation, which is to say that the work I do is a continuation of the work of salvation. Every person has the chance to be made perfect: Provided that you are willing, provided that you pursue, in the end you will be able to achieve this result, and not one of you will be forsaken. If you are of poor caliber, My requirements of you will be in accordance with your poor caliber; if you are of high caliber, My requirements of you will be in accordance with your high caliber; if you are ignorant and illiterate, My requirements of you will be in accordance with your illiteracy; if you are literate, My requirements of you will be in accordance with the fact that you are literate; if you are elderly, My requirements of you will be in accordance with your age; if you are capable of providing hospitality, My requirements of you will be in accordance with this capability; if you say you cannot offer hospitality, and can only perform a certain function, whether it be spreading the gospel, or**



**taking care of the church, or attending to other general affairs, My perfection of you will be in accordance with the function that you perform”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Restoring the Normal Life of Man and Taking Him to a Wonderful Destination). Having read God’s word, I was really moved, but also ashamed at the same time. I misunderstood and blamed God without understanding His intention. I thought I had been assigned to general affairs work on account of poor caliber, and that I’d be eliminated after finishing my labor. In fact, God has never said He won’t save people with poor caliber, and He does not treat people based on their caliber or what duty they do. He looks at whether they love and pursue the truth. That’s what’s key for whether they can be saved. I thought of an evil person cleared out by the church before. She seemed to have caliber and her duty inspired admiration, but she always pursued status, oppressed others and excluded those with different views. She had already been pruned repeatedly, but didn’t repent. Eventually, she was cleared out from the church. And most of the false leaders and antichrists who have been exposed and eliminated in recent years have caliber and gifts outwardly, but they didn’t pursue the truth. They all performed many evils for name and status, and were on a path against God. No matter how great someone’s caliber may seem, how high their status may be, if they don’t pursue the truth, being exposed and eliminated by God is just a matter of time. I also thought about some brothers and sisters of average caliber whose duties aren’t remarkable, but they are able to put their heart into it, standing in the position of a created being. When they reveal corruption, they come before God to pray and seek, to self-reflect and know themselves through God’s words. Their corrupt dispositions do change over time. God’s disposition is so righteous. God doesn’t treat anyone unfairly. Regardless of the quality of our caliber, whatever duty we do, God nurtures and waters everyone

equally, and sets up situations for us to experience God's words and enter into the truth reality. God's work to save man is so practical! After understanding God's intention, I wasn't so resistant to my current duty, but wanted to submit and perform it well.

I read some of God's words later on: **"For you to be able to perform your duty in God's house today, whether it's big or small, whether it's physical or mental, and whether it's handling external issues or internal work, no one's performing of their duty is happening by accident. How could this be your choice? This is all led by God. It's only because of God's commissioning you that you're moved like this, you have this sense of mission and responsibility, and you can perform this duty. There are so many among nonbelievers with good looks, knowledge, or talent, but does God favor them? No, He doesn't. God did not select them, and He favors only the lot of you. He has all of you undertake every kind of role, perform all kinds of duties, and take up different kinds of responsibilities in His management work. When God's management plan finally comes to an end and is achieved, what a glory and a privilege this will be! So then, when people suffer a little hardship while they perform their duty today; when they have to give some things up, expend themselves a little, and pay a certain price; when they lose their status and their fame and gain in the world; and when these things are all gone, it seems like it's all been taken from them by God, but they've gained something more precious and more valuable. What have people gained from God? They've gained the truth and life by performing their duty. Only when you've fulfilled your duty, you've completed God's commission, you live your whole life for your mission and the commission God's given you, you have a beautiful testimony, and you live a life that has value—only then are**

**you a real person! And why do I say you're a real person? Because God has selected you and had you perform your duty as a created being within His management. This is the greatest value and the greatest meaning in your life"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Part Three). **"God does not look at what you say or promise before Him; He looks at whether what you do has truth reality. Also, God does not care how high, profound, or mighty your actions are, and even if you do a small little thing, if God sees sincerity in your every move, He shall say, 'This person sincerely believes in Me. They have never boasted. They conduct themselves according to their station. Although they may not have made a great contribution to God's house and are of poor caliber, they are steadfast and have sincerity in all they do.' What does this 'sincerity' contain? It contains fear and submission to God, as well as true faith and love; it contains everything God wants to see. Such people may seem unremarkable to others, and they could well be a person who makes food or does the cleaning up, someone who performs an ordinary duty. Such people are unremarkable to others, haven't achieved anything great, and have nothing estimable, admirable or enviable about them—they are just ordinary people. And yet, all that God requires is found in them and lived out in them, and they give it all to God. Tell Me, what more does God want? He is satisfied with them"**

(The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Part Three). God's words showed me that no matter what duty I get, it's from God's rule and arrangements. I should submit and approach it all with my heart. No matter what my caliber is or how much I'm able to do, I should put in everything I have, give it my all. That's God's intention, and that is what doing my duty really is.

After this, I took on a correct attitude and carried out the general affairs work diligently, and after a while, I saw that it wasn't the drudgery I'd imagined at all. There are lots of principles to grasp and enter into in that duty, and it requires a genuine, truth-seeking heart in the course of performing it. Through a period of practice, I gained a lot from handling general affairs. I learned some skills and came to understand some principles, and I also experienced how practical God's salvation of mankind is. This duty change shifted the incorrect perspective I'd had toward duties and I became willing to submit to God's arrangements and do my best in my duty. Thanks be to God!

## 50. What Lies Behind Refusing to Be a Leader

By Christina, USA

In January of 2022, I was selected to serve as a church leader and was mainly put in charge of supervising video production. At the time I felt quite conflicted: On the one hand, I worried that because I lacked technical skills, if I submitted but was unable to do my work well, I would be revealed and dismissed. On the other hand, if I refused to do this duty, I would feel quite guilty. So, I prayed to God, asking Him to guide me to understand His intention. That day, I happened to meet up with a brother who fellowshiped with me in the following way after hearing about my state: “The main reason you don’t want to serve as a leader is out of consideration for your own prospects and destiny. You’re worried that you won’t be able to do real work and will be revealed and dismissed. You also have the fallacious viewpoint that it is dangerous to be a leader, because leaders are liable to be revealed and eliminated. You keep your guard up against God and misunderstand Him. In reality, the reason why many leaders are revealed and eliminated is not because they were in that position, but rather because they failed to pursue the truth and walk the right path and always sought after status and ran amok doing bad things.” The brother’s fellowship precisely identified my way of thinking and helped me to gain some knowledge of my state. After that, I sought out words of God related to my state to eat and drink.

One day, I came across two passages of God’s words: **“When a simple adjustment is made to their duty, people should answer with an attitude of obedience, do as God’s house tells them to, and do what they are able, and, no matter what they do, do it as well as is within their power, with all their heart and all their strength. What God has done is**

not in error. Such a simple truth can be practiced by people with a little conscience and reason, but this is beyond the abilities of antichrists. When it comes to the adjustment of duties, antichrists will immediately offer arguments, sophistry, and defiance, and deep down they refuse to accept it. Just what is in their heart? Suspicion and doubt, they then probe others using all kinds of methods. ... Why would they make a simple thing so complicated? There is only one reason: Antichrists never obey the arrangements of God's house, and they always closely link their duty, fame, gain, and status with their hope of gaining blessings and their future destination, as if once their reputation and status are lost, they have no hope of gaining blessings and rewards, and this feels like losing their lives to them. They think, 'I have to be careful, I mustn't be careless! God's house, the brothers and sisters, the leaders and workers, and even god can't be relied upon. I can't trust any of them. The person you can rely on most and who is most worthy of trust is yourself. If you're not making plans for yourself, then who is going to care about you? Who is going to consider your future? Who is going to consider whether or not you're going to receive blessings? Therefore, I have to make careful plans and calculations for my own sake. I can't make mistakes or be even slightly careless, otherwise, what will I do if somebody tries to take advantage of me?' Therefore, they guard themselves against the leaders and workers of God's house, fearing that somebody will discern or see through them, and that they'll then be dismissed and their dream of blessings will be spoiled. They think they must maintain their reputation and status in order for them to have hope of gaining blessings. An antichrist sees being blessed as greater than the heavens, greater than life, more important than pursuing the truth, dispositional change, or personal salvation, and

**more important than doing their duty well, and being a created being that is up to standard. They think that being a created being that is up to standard, doing their duty well and being saved are all paltry things that are hardly worth mentioning or remarking on, while gaining blessings is the only thing in their entire life that can never be forgotten. In whatever they encounter, no matter how great or small, they relate it to being blessed, and are incredibly cautious and attentive, and they always leave a way out for themselves” (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Twelve: They Want to Withdraw When They Have No Status and No Hope of Gaining Blessings). “As a created being, when one comes before the Creator, they ought to perform their duty. This is a very proper thing to do, and they should fulfill this responsibility. On the basis that created beings perform their duties, the Creator has done even greater work among humankind, and He has carried out a further stage of work on people. And what work is that? He provides humankind with the truth, allowing them to gain the truth from Him as they perform their duties and thereby to cast off their corrupt dispositions and be purified. Thus, they come to satisfy God’s intentions and embark on the right path in life, and, ultimately, they are able to fear God and shun evil, attain complete salvation, and no longer be subjected to Satan’s afflictions. This is the effect that God would have humankind achieve in the end by performing their duties. ... Such a beautiful and such a great thing is twisted by the ilk of the antichrists into a transaction, in which they solicit crowns and rewards from God’s hand. Such a transaction turns something most beautiful and just into something most ugly and wicked. Is this not what the antichrists do? Judging from this, are the antichrists not wicked? They are quite wicked indeed! This is a manifestation of their wickedness” (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Nine**

(Part Seven)). God's words exposed how antichrists only believe in God to gain blessings. No matter what situation they encounter, they always consider it in the light of their destination and blessings. Even when faced with something as simple as an adjustment in their duty, they can't purely submit, but mull over and weigh how the decision will affect their future prospects. If the adjustment serves their interests and will allow them to gain blessings, they accept it, but if the adjustment threatens their prospects and destiny, they find a way to get out of it, fearing that if they take a wrong step they'll be revealed, eliminated and have no hope of gaining blessings. I saw that antichrists' nature essence is truly wicked and deceitful! I reflected on how my attitude toward having my duty adjusted was just like that of an antichrist. When I heard that I had been selected as a church leader, the first thing I thought of was my own future prospects, outcome and destination. I analyzed the duty to see if it would be beneficial to me and before I had even started serving as a leader, I had already considered all the possible consequences of failing to do my duty well. I was full of suspicion and leering toward God and didn't submit in the slightest. I even thought up some high-sounding excuses to get out of the duty—I could say I didn't have the caliber to be a leader and that I'd delay the work. Outwardly, it may have seemed as though I wasn't pursuing status and was quite reasonable, but there was an unspeakable motive behind all this: I was scared of taking on the responsibilities of a leader and the risk of being revealed and eliminated if I did it poorly. Thus, I wanted to get out of the duty to ensure my future prospects. God's intention is to give us opportunities to practice doing duties to help us understand the truth, enter into reality, cast off our corrupt dispositions and attain salvation. When such a wonderful opportunity was given to me, I not only failed to be thankful for God's grace, I actually misunderstood and was leery of God and wanted



to get out of and reject the duty I was assigned. I was truly selfish and deceitful!

Going forward, I looked for more passages of God's words related to my fallacious viewpoint. I found these passages: **"Tell Me, once corrupt people gain status—regardless of who they are—do they then become antichrists? Is this absolute?** (If they do not pursue the truth, then they will become antichrists, but if they do pursue the truth, then they will not.) **That is absolutely right: If people do not pursue the truth, they are sure to become antichrists. And is it the case that all who walk the path of antichrists do so because of status? No, it is chiefly because they have no love of the truth, because they are not right people. Regardless of whether they have status or not, people who do not pursue the truth all walk the path of antichrists. No matter how many sermons they have heard, such people do not accept the truth, they do not walk the right path, but are determined to go toward the crooked path. This is akin to how people eat: Some do not consume food that can nurture their bodies and support a normal existence, but instead insist on consuming things that do them harm, ultimately shooting themselves in the foot. Is this not their own choice? After being eliminated, some leaders and workers spread notions, saying, 'Don't be a leader, and don't let yourself gain status. People are in danger the minute they gain any status, and God will reveal them! Once they are revealed, they will not even be qualified to be ordinary believers, and will receive no blessings at all.'** What sort of thing is that to say? At best, it represents a misunderstanding of God; at worst, it is blasphemy against Him. If you do not walk the right path, do not pursue the truth, and do not follow God's way, but instead you insist on walking the path of antichrists and end up on Paul's path, ultimately meeting the same outcome, the same

**end as Paul, still complaining about God and passing judgment on God as unrighteous, then are you not the genuine article of an antichrist? Such behavior is cursed!”** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. How to Resolve the Temptations and Bondage of Status). **“Some people think, ‘Anyone who leads is foolish and ignorant and is bringing about their own destruction, because acting as a leader inevitably makes people reveal corruption for God to see. Would there be so much corruption revealed if they didn’t do this work?’ What an absurd idea! If you don’t act as a leader, will you not reveal corruption? Does not being a leader, even if you show less corruption, mean that you have attained salvation? According to this argument, are all those who do not serve as leaders the ones who can survive and be saved? Isn’t this statement too ridiculous? People who serve as leaders guide God’s chosen people to eat and drink the word of God and to experience God’s work. This requirement and standard is high, so it is inevitable that leaders will reveal some corrupt states when they first begin training. This is normal, and God does not condemn it. God not only does not condemn it, but He also enlightens, illuminates, and guides these people, and places extra burdens on them. As long as they can submit to God’s guidance and work, they will progress faster in life than ordinary people. If they are people who pursue the truth, they can embark on the path of being made perfect by God. This is the thing that is most blessed by God. Some people can’t see this, and they distort the facts. According to human understanding, no matter how much a leader changes, God will not care; He will only look at how much corruption leaders and workers reveal, and only condemn them based on this. And for those who are not leaders and workers, because they reveal little corruption, even if they do not change, God will not condemn them.**

**Isn't this absurd? Isn't it blasphemy against God? If you resist God so seriously in your heart, can you be saved? You cannot be saved. God determines people's outcomes mainly based on whether they have the truth and true testimony, and it mainly depends on whether they are people who pursue the truth. If they do pursue the truth, and they can truly repent after they are judged and chastised for committing a transgression, then as long as they do not say words or do things that blaspheme God, they will surely be capable of attaining salvation. According to your imaginings, all ordinary believers who follow God to the end can achieve salvation, and those who serve as leaders must all be eliminated. If you were asked to be a leader, you'd think that it would not be okay not to do it, but that if you were to serve as a leader, you would involuntarily reveal corruption, and that would be just like sending yourself to the guillotine. Isn't this all caused by your misunderstandings about God? If people's outcomes were determined based on the corruption that they reveal, no one could be saved. In that case, what would be the point of God doing the work of salvation? If this truly were the case, where would the righteousness of God be? Mankind would be unable to see God's righteous disposition. Therefore, you have all misunderstood God's intentions, which shows that you do not have true knowledge of God"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Part Three). Through God's words I learned that false leaders and antichrists were not revealed and eliminated because they were serving as leaders, but rather because they failed to pursue the truth and walk the right path after gaining status. What's more, they disrupted and disturbed church work and would not repent no matter how others pruned them—this is the real reason they were revealed and eliminated. God does not condemn people based upon a single revelation of corruption or a single

mistake; He takes into account their nature essence and the path they walk. Even though we reveal our corrupt disposition on multiple occasions and commit certain transgressions, as long as we seek the truth and truly repent, God will give us another chance. God only eliminates antichrists and evil people who are averse to and hate the truth and never repent no matter how many transgressions they commit. I thought of the false leaders and antichrists that were revealed and eliminated by God in the past. Some only spoke of words and doctrines and gave orders but failed to resolve actual issues and coveted the benefits of their status. Ultimately, they were defined as false leaders and dismissed. Others only sought after status and reputation while working, vied for fame with others, arbitrarily suppressed and tormented people, severely went against work arrangements and followed their own plans, established an “independent kingdom,” ensnared people, utterly refused to repent and were ultimately revealed as antichrist demons and expelled. These are the types of people who are revealed and eliminated. Realizing this, I came to understand that people are not revealed and eliminated based upon what duty they do, but rather based upon whether they pursue the truth and whether the essence of their humanity is good or evil. If someone does not pursue the truth and has poor humanity, then even if they are not a leader, they will not do their duties well; if they always slack off while working, act perfunctorily and don’t even perform acceptable labor, they will still ultimately be eliminated. I realized that the church handles and arranges people in a very principled manner, that God’s disposition is righteous and that the church is ruled by truth and righteousness. However, I hadn’t seen this fact and had fallaciously thought that being a leader would do me in. My views were so absurd!

One time during my devotionals, I came across this passage of God’s words: **“There is no correlation between the duty of man and whether**

he is blessed or cursed. Duty is what man ought to fulfill; it is his heaven-sent vocation, and should not depend on recompense, conditions, or reasons. Only then is he doing his duty. To be blessed is when someone is made perfect and enjoys God's blessings after experiencing judgment. To be cursed is when someone's disposition does not change after they have experienced chastisement and judgment, it is when they do not experience being made perfect but are punished. But regardless of whether they are blessed or cursed, created beings should fulfill their duty, doing what they ought to do, and doing what they are able to do; this is the least that a person, a person who pursues God, should do. You should not do your duty only to be blessed, and you should not refuse to act for fear of being cursed. Let Me tell you this one thing: Man's performance of his duty is what he ought to do, and if he is incapable of performing his duty, then this is his rebelliousness. It is through the process of doing his duty that man is gradually changed, and it is through this process that he demonstrates his loyalty. As such, the more you are able to do your duty, the more truth you shall receive, and the more real your expression shall become. Those who merely go through the motions in doing their duty and do not seek the truth shall be eliminated in the end, for such people do not do their duty in the practice of truth, and do not practice truth in the performance of their duty. They are those who remain unchanged and will be cursed. Not only are their expressions impure, but everything they express is evil" (The Word, Vol. 1.

The Appearance and Work of God. The Difference Between the Ministry of God Incarnate and the Duty of Man). I felt even clearer after reading God's words. There is no correlation between the duty one does and whether one is blessed or cursed. It follows from the fact that we are created beings that we ought to fulfill

our duties. If someone is unable to fulfill their duty, then they cannot be called a created being. Just as it is right and proper for children to be filial to their parents; regardless of whether they ultimately grant them rights to their property, children ought to fulfill their responsibilities and obligations. As for me, what kind of attitude did I have toward my duty? When I thought that I would have to take on more responsibility as a leader and if I did poorly it would threaten my prospects and destiny, I wanted to look for excuses to get out of the duty and reject it. I didn't regard the duty as a responsibility or obligation that I ought to fulfill in the slightest. Instead, I looked at duties as a kind of transaction and chose them based on whether they would bring me blessings or curses. I didn't have the slightest bit of reason that a created being should have in regard to their duty. What's more, I fallaciously believed that because I wasn't a professional and didn't have technical skills in video production, I wouldn't be able to do my work well. Yet, God clearly says: **"In fact, as a leader, after completing work arrangements, you must keep track of the work's progress. Even if you aren't familiar with that field of work—even if you lack any knowledge of it—you can find a way to do your work. You can find someone who is knowledgeable, who understands the work in question, to check things over and make suggestions. From their suggestions you can identify the appropriate principles, and thus you will be able to keep track of the work"** (The Word, Vol. 5. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers (4)). God's words directly refuted my notions—God never required that we have mastery over all the technical skills in an area in order to be a leader. Even if we have no professional experience in an area, we can always find brothers and sisters with technical knowledge to collaborate with us and seek principles in this fashion. That way, we are still able to do the work, and if we really can't figure something

out, we can seek help from the upper leadership. However, if I put all my heart into it and tried my very best, but my stature was just too small, my caliber was lacking and I was just not up to this work, then I could resign and take on a different duty. Having realized God's intention, I felt a lot more clear-eyed on the matter and put aside my worries and anxieties.

Later on, I came across another two passages of God's words that say: **"When Noah did as God instructed, he did not know what God's intentions were. He did not know what God wanted to accomplish. God had only given him a command and instructed him to do something, and without much explanation, Noah went ahead and did it. He did not try to secretly figure out God's desires, nor did he resist God or show insincerity. He just went and did it accordingly with a pure and simple heart. Whatever God had him do, he did, and submitting and listening to God's word underpinned his belief in what he did. That was how straightforwardly and simply he dealt with what God entrusted. His essence—the essence of his actions was submission, not second-guessing, not resisting, and moreover, not thinking of his own personal interests or his gains and losses. Further, when God said He would destroy the world with a flood, Noah did not ask when or ask what would become of things, and he certainly did not ask God how He was going to destroy the world. He simply did as God instructed. However God wanted it to be made and made with what, he did exactly as God asked and also commenced action immediately. He acted according to God's instructions with an attitude of wanting to satisfy God. Was he doing it to help himself avoid the disaster? No. Did he ask God how much longer it would be before the world was to be destroyed? He did not. Did he ask God or did he know how long it would take to build the ark? He did not know that either. He simply submitted, listened, and**

**acted accordingly”** (The Word, Vol. 2. On Knowing God. God’s Work, God’s Disposition, and God Himself I). **“What are the manifestations of an honest person? Firstly, having no doubts about God’s words. That is one of the manifestations of an honest person. Apart from this, the most important manifestation is seeking and practicing the truth in all matters—this is most crucial. You say that you are honest, but you always push God’s words to the back of your mind and just do whatever you want. Is that the manifestation of an honest person? You say, ‘Although my caliber is poor, I have an honest heart.’ And yet when a duty falls to you, you are afraid of suffering and bearing responsibility if you do not do it well, so you make excuses to shirk your duty or suggest that someone else do it. Is this the manifestation of an honest person? Clearly, it is not. How, then, should an honest person behave? They should submit to God’s arrangements, be loyal to the duty they are supposed to perform, and strive to satisfy God’s intentions. This manifests itself in several ways: One is accepting your duty with an honest heart, not considering your fleshly interests, not being half-hearted about it, and not plotting for your own benefit. Those are manifestations of honesty. Another is putting all your heart and strength into performing your duty well, doing things properly, and putting your heart and love into your duty to satisfy God. These are the manifestations an honest person should have while performing their duty”** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Part Three). Through God’s words I learned that Noah hadn’t heard many of God’s words and had never built an ark before, but when faced with God’s commission, he did not analyze or examine it, and he did not try to guess God’s desires. Rather, he just obeyed, submitted and did whatever God told him to do without considering how it would affect his own interests. Noah’s



innocence and honesty had a deep impact on me and I felt quite embarrassed and ashamed. I thought of how my brothers and sisters had selected me as their leader, but when faced with such an important duty, all I could think about were my own interests and I even considered all the possible consequences that might befall me if I took the duty. I saw how deceitful I had been—my humanity was nothing compared with someone like Noah. How could I possibly do my duty well with such an attitude? I came upon a passage of God's words that say: **“What sort of person dares to take on responsibility? What sort of person has the courage to bear a heavy burden? Someone who takes the lead and goes bravely forth at the most crucial moment in the work of God's house, who is not afraid to bear a heavy responsibility and endure great hardship when they see the work that is most important and crucial. That is someone loyal to God, a good soldier of Christ”** (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Eight: They Would Have Others Submit Only to Them, Not the Truth or God (Part One)). God's words deeply touched me—I realized I had to stop considering my own future prospects. I was selected as leader, so I should consider God's intention, dare to take on this great responsibility and emulate Noah in approaching my duty with an honest and pure heart. At first, I didn't know where to start in my duty, so I would often pray to God and also received patient support from my partner sister and encouragement from other brothers and sisters. Sometimes, when I encountered difficulties, I would seek out the brothers and sisters who had gotten good results in their work and they would generously share the principles they'd grasped and any effective methods they'd used with me. I was deeply moved. Gradually, I began to grasp certain principles and paths of practice and became more effective in my duty. I truly felt God's guidance and was particularly grateful to God. I still

have many deficiencies and I know I bear a heavy responsibility, but I no longer wish to shrink back—I will rely on God to strive to improve!

# 51. Goodbye to the Rat Race

By Rosalie, South Korea

I started watering newcomers in the church a couple years ago. I knew this was a really important duty, so I swore that I would put more effort into pursuing the truth, water the newcomers well, and help them quickly get their footing on the true way. Normally I'd read God's words whenever I had the time, to equip myself with the truths on visions. In gatherings, I would earnestly ponder newcomers' problems and difficulties, and look to God's words to fellowship and resolve them. When I couldn't understand or resolve something, I'd seek with other brothers and sisters. Over time, brothers and sisters who were new to the faith started seeking me out for fellowship when they encountered problems or difficulties. I felt really happy and that even though I'd only been performing this duty for a short time, everyone was looking up to me. It seemed that I wasn't doing too bad, so I had even more enthusiasm for my duty.

Later on, the leader assigned Sister Natalie to work alongside me. I found after a little while that she took on a lot of responsibility in her duty and excelled at uncovering problems and deviations in our work, and that she was able to solve some problems. Everyone really liked her and would usually find her to fellowship with when they had issues. Seeing all this got me worrying: "Natalie is pretty new, but the others already think so highly of her. When they have problems, will they start only seeking her out, and not me? Will they think I don't match up to her? No. I have to work harder so that everyone sees that Natalie isn't better than me. It's the only way to keep my place in everyone's hearts." After that, before every gathering I would first understand the states and the difficulties of the brothers and sisters, then work to find words of God and make notes on them. During

gatherings, I was preoccupied with how to give better fellowship than Natalie so everyone would think I was more capable. To my surprise, one day the leader told us that the majority of the brothers and sisters had agreed to Natalie serving as group leader and taking on the responsibilities of the group's work. I was stunned, and thought, "Did I hear that wrong? Natalie has been elected as group leader? I've been doing this duty longer than her but haven't been elected. What will the brothers and sisters think when they find out? Will they think she's better than me? How can I show my face again?" I just couldn't accept that fact, and felt extremely distressed. I knew I shouldn't think about it that way. But I was living in a state of pursuing name and status, and I couldn't control myself. All I could do was try to comfort myself, "This is fine, too, all I need to do is perform my own duty well, and not worry so much." At the time, I didn't really seek the truth or reflect on myself about this.

Then one day, I found out that Sister Sadie was in a bad state, and wasn't attending gatherings. I contacted her, hoping to fellowship with her, but she said she'd been in touch with Natalie and that they'd already fellowshipped about it. This was kind of upsetting for me to hear. "Sadie always used to come to me with her problems, but now she is going straight to Natalie instead. Does she think I'm not as good as her? If things go on like this, is everyone going to forget all about me?" This thought left me feeling really demoralized, and I developed a bias against Natalie, believing that she was stealing my thunder. I didn't want to work with her after that. When she sought me out to discuss work, I'd give her the cold shoulder, and sometimes would just speak to her perfunctorily. Once, when we were in an online gathering, Natalie gave fellowship in response to a sister's question, and I was so worried that she would upstage me that I wasn't able to take any of it in. I just thought persistently about how to surpass her in

fellowship, and let the brothers and sisters see that I could solve problems as well as she could. When Natalie was done, the sister who had posed the question said she still didn't quite understand the specific path of practice. Hearing this, I gloated, thinking: "You fellowshipped quite a bit without resolving the real problem. Now you've got egg on your face. I need to jump on this chance to make a good show so everyone can see that I am better than you, and that my fellowship is better than yours." I started to fellowship right away. When I was done, it became evident that I hadn't understood this sister's question at all, and my response was way off the mark. She even messaged me to tell me my fellowship had gone off topic. I felt like an idiot at the time and wanted to find a hole to crawl into. I got off the call right then because something urgent had come up. Later, I saw they were still online in the gathering and a malicious thought sprung to mind: "If Natalie keeps talking like this, who knows how long she'll go on for. If I can't be in the gathering, then no one can, or Natalie will be the only one in the limelight." So, without really giving it any thought, I sent this message: "The gathering time is over, there's no need to drag things out. We can discuss any problems later." A few minutes later, the gathering had ended. I sat there in front of the computer feeling really unsettled. I was so embarrassed about the fellowship I'd shared, and I felt guilty when I thought about how I'd reveled in Natalie's inability to solve the problem. I said to myself, "What am I doing? Instead of thinking about how to work with her to do our duty well, I am in a jealous struggle, both openly and secretly, and trying to undermine her. Is that doing my duty?" I came before God to pray: "God, I'm living in a state of vying for name and status, always competing and comparing myself with Natalie, and wanting other people's admiration. I know this state is wrong, but I can't escape it. God, please guide me to know myself."

During a gathering, I saw these words of God: **“When antichrists do a duty, no matter what it is and regardless of the group they are in, they demonstrate a distinct form of conduct, which is that in everything, they always want to stand out and exhibit themselves, they always tend to constrain people and control them, they always want to lead people and call the shots, they always want to be in the limelight, they always want to draw people’s eyes and attention to them, and they want admiration from everyone. Whenever antichrists join a group, regardless of its numbers, who the members of the group are, or what their profession or identity is, antichrists first take stock of things to see who is imposing and outstanding, who is eloquent, who is impressive, and who is qualified or has prestige. They evaluate who they can beat and who they can’t, as well as who surpasses them and who is inferior. These are the first things they look at. After quickly assessing the situation, they begin to take action, setting aside and ignoring those who are beneath them for the time being. They go first to those who they believe are superior, who have some prestige and status, or those with gifts and talent. These are the people they first measure themselves against. If any of these people are held in esteem by the brothers and sisters, or have been long-time believers in God and are in good standing, then they become targets of antichrists’ envy, and of course are seen as competition. Then, antichrists quietly compare themselves to these people who have prestige, who have status, and who command the brothers’ and sisters’ admiration. They begin to ponder such people, examining what they can do and what they have mastered, and why some people esteem them. Watching and observing, the antichrists realize that these people are experts in a certain profession, as well as the fact that everyone holds them in high regard, because**

they have believed in God for longer, and they can share some experiential testimony. Antichrists regard such people as ‘prey’ and recognize them as opponents, and then they form a plan of action. What plan of action? They look at the aspects where they do not match up with their opponents and then begin to work on these aspects. For example, if they are not as good at a certain profession as them, they will study that profession, reading books more, looking up all sorts of information more, and humbly asking others for instruction more. They will participate in every kind of work related to that profession, gradually accumulating experience and cultivating their own power. And when they believe that they have the capital to contend with their opponents, they frequently come forward to express their own ‘brilliant views,’ and often deliberately refute and belittle their opponents, to embarrass them and muddy their names, and thereby highlight how clever and extraordinary they are, and suppress their opponents. Clear-sighted people can see all of these things, only those who are foolish and ignorant and lack discernment cannot. Most people just see the antichrists’ enthusiasm, their pursuit, their suffering, price-paying, and external good behavior, but the true situation is concealed in the depths of the antichrists’ hearts. What is their core objective? It is to gain status. The target on which all their work, all their toil, and all the price they pay is centered is the thing in their hearts they worship the most: status and power” (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Nine (Part Three)).

When I read God’s word, I felt that God could see my thoughts and feelings, as clear as day. I reflected on how, since taking on the watering work, I’d treated it as a chance to show off. I’d wanted to resolve others’ problems as a way to gain their admiration and approval. After the leader assigned Natalie to work with me, I hadn’t thought about how we could do

our duty well together, and instead I was always competing with her and comparing myself to her. I was obsessed with who the brothers and sisters sought out for help, which of us had more prestige, or more standing among the others. I felt threatened when I saw how everyone looked up to Natalie and felt cast aside, so I started to see her as someone to compete against. I wanted to beat her and surpass her in everything I said and did, and I tried everything to get the brothers and sisters to think I was better than her. I appeared to be doing my duty, but I wasn't thinking at all about how to do it well, how we could get the most out of gatherings, or if the difficulties and problems of my brothers and sisters had been resolved. Every single thing I did was for the sake of reputation and status. Isn't that the disposition of an antichrist? Antichrists place status and prestige above everything. They envy, fight against, and compare themselves to anyone better than them. They'll stop at nothing to trample, belittle, and smear anyone for the sake of status, to elevate themselves and show off. In everything I was doing, weren't my ulterior motives the same as an antichrist's? Doing my duty with that kind of intention was taking the path of an antichrist, and resisting God. Realizing this, I was overcome with regret. I didn't want to keep going on that path, and wished to really seek the truth and resolve my corrupt disposition.

Later, I read these words of God: **“In the camp of Satan, whether in society or in official circles, what is the prevailing atmosphere? What practices are popular? You ought to have some understanding of these. What are the principles and guidelines for their actions? Each is a law unto themselves; each goes their own way. They act in their own interests and do as they choose. Whoever has authority gets the final say. They do not give even a fleeting thought to others. They just do as they will, striving for fame, gain, and status, and acting entirely**



according to their own preferences. As soon as they receive power, they quickly exert this power over others. If you offend them, they wish to put you through the wringer, and you are unable to do anything but offer them gifts. They are as vicious as scorpions, willing to violate laws, government regulations, and even commit crimes. These are all things they are capable of. This is how dark and evil it is in Satan's camp. Now, God has come to save humanity, to allow people to accept the truth, understand the truth, and break free from Satan's bondage and power. If you don't accept the truth and don't practice the truth, aren't you still living under Satan's power? In that case, what is the difference between your current state and that of devils and Satan? You would compete in the same way that nonbelievers compete. You would fight in the same way that nonbelievers fight. From morning to night, you would plot, scheme, envy, and engage in disputes. What is the root of this problem? It is because people have corrupt dispositions, and live according to these corrupt dispositions. The reign of corrupt dispositions is the reign of Satan; corrupted humanity dwells within a satanic disposition, and no one is an exception. So, you should not think that you are too good, too meek, or too honest to engage in struggles for power and gain. If you do not understand the truth and are not led by God, you are certainly not an exception, and in no way will you, on account of your guilelessness or kindness, or because of your youth, keep yourself from struggling for fame and gain. In fact, you will also seek fame, gain and status as long as you have the chance and circumstances permit. Grasping for fame and gain is the signature behavior of humans who have the wicked nature of Satan. No one is an exception. All corrupt mankind lives for fame, gain and status, and they will pay any price in their struggle for these things. It is so with all

**who live under Satan's power. Therefore, one who does not accept or understand the truth, who cannot act according to the principles, is one who is living amidst a satanic disposition. A satanic disposition has already come to dominate your thoughts and control your behavior; Satan has gotten you entirely under its control and bondage, and if you do not accept the truth and rebel against Satan, you will not be able to escape"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. The Principles That Should Guide One's Conduct). After reading God's words, I saw why I couldn't stop myself from fighting for prestige and personal gain. It was because I'd been steeped in and corrupted by satanic views and poisons. Ever since I was little, I had been taught and instilled at home and school with ideas such as: "Every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost," "Man struggles upward; water flows downward," and "One must endure the greatest hardships in order to become the greatest of men." So I wanted others' admiration no matter what group I was in, and I reveled in the feeling of being admired and approved of. I thought that was the only dignified, valuable life. I was still living by these satanic ideas and perspectives while I did my duty in the church. In pursuing others' admiration, I'd treated Natalie as my adversary, obsessing over how to outdo her. I'd even resorted to doing heartless things, using underhanded means to disrupt her fellowship in the gathering. I'd always thought that climbing the ranks and being admired was the only dignified way to live. The facts had shown me that when I lived by these satanic poisons, my ambition and desires just grew and grew, and I became more and more narrow-minded until my behavior was despicable and particularly disgusting to God. There was not a shred of dignity in living this way. I finally saw how deeply corrupted I'd been by Satan. I couldn't tell the difference between positive and negative things, and I'd lost my conscience and reason. Had it not been for the

judgment and revelation of God's word, I wouldn't have reflected on and known myself, nor would I have seen clearly the consequences and danger of seeking fame and status. I would only have continued to live by satanic poisons, and who knows what kind of evil I would have done? From my heart, I thanked God for His guidance, and for giving me some knowledge of myself.

Later, I read another passage of God's word, and within it I found the practical path to freeing myself from the bonds of fame and status. God's words say: **"When God requires that people fulfill their duty well, He is not asking them to complete a certain number of tasks or accomplish any great endeavors, nor to perform any great undertakings. What God wants is for people to be able to do all they can in a down-to-earth way, and live in accordance with His words. God does not need you to be great or noble, or bring about any miracles, nor does He want to see any pleasant surprises in you. He does not need such things. All God needs is for you to steadfastly practice according to His words. When you listen to God's words, do what you have understood, carry out what you have comprehended, remember well what you have heard, and then, when the time comes to practice, do so according to God's words. Let them become your life, your realities, and what you live out. Thus, God will be satisfied. You always seek greatness, nobility, and status; you always seek exaltation. How does God feel when He sees this? He loathes it, and He will distance Himself from you. The more you pursue things like greatness, nobility, and being superior to others, distinguished, outstanding, and noteworthy, the more disgusting God finds you. If you do not reflect upon yourself and repent, then God will loathe you and forsake you. Avoid becoming someone whom God finds disgusting; be a person that God loves. So, how can one attain God's**

**love? By accepting the truth obediently, standing in the position of a created being, acting by God's words with one's feet on the ground, properly performing one's duties, being an honest person, and living out a human likeness. This is enough, God will be satisfied. People must be sure not to hold ambition or entertain idle dreams, not to seek fame, gain, and status or to stand out from the crowd. Even more, they must not try to be a person of greatness or superhuman, superior among men and making others worship them. That is the desire of corrupt humanity, and it is the path of Satan; God does not save such people. If people incessantly pursue fame, gain, and status without repenting, then there is no cure for them, and only one outcome: to be eliminated"**

(The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. The Proper Fulfillment of Duty Requires Harmonious Cooperation). Through God's words, I realized that He doesn't ask people to be famous or great. He doesn't require them to accomplish anything incredible. God just wants us to honestly practice in accordance with His words, and fulfill the duties and responsibilities of a created being. Such a person is truly dignified in God's eyes, and pleases Him. Man should worship and honor God as great. But I was always seeking a place in people's hearts and trying to make them look up to and adore me. In doing so, wasn't I going against His requirements and walking the path of resisting God? I lacked the truth reality. There were lots of things I couldn't understand or resolve, and I was only able to spout a few doctrines, but I always thought highly of myself. I wanted to be looked up to and worshiped by others shamelessly, and fought for it when that didn't happen. I didn't know myself at all, and I knew no shame! God is the Lord of creation, and He is supreme and great. He has become incarnate and come to the earth to express the truth and save mankind. He's done such tremendous work, but He still doesn't show off or position Himself as God.

He is hidden and humble. Seeing how lovely God's essence is left me even more ashamed and guilty. I resolved to rebel against my flesh and practice the truth. I came before God and prayed: "Oh God, I'm always vying and comparing myself to others while performing my duty, and seeking status so that others will look up to me. This disgusts You, and I don't want to live this way anymore. I want to put aside fame and status, and keep my feet on the ground while I do my duty. Please guide me." After that, I sought out Natalie and opened up to her about my state and corruption. We fellowshiped on the importance of harmonious cooperation. In that moment, I felt so steady and at peace.

After that, I'd still get urges to compete while working with Natalie, but when these thoughts arose, I would quickly say a prayer and rebel against myself. I remember once when it was Natalie's turn to host a gathering, I saw she was too busy to prepare, so I found some relevant words of God to address the others' issues. I thought, "I was the one that found these passages. If the gathering goes well, will the brothers and sisters think it was Natalie who did all the work? Will they think she takes on more of a burden than me? Maybe I should host this one." Just as I was thinking about this, I realized that this was me fighting for prestige and personal gain again. Then these words of God came to mind: **"You must learn to let go and set these things aside, to recommend others, and to allow them to stand out. Do not struggle or rush to take advantage of opportunities to stand out and shine. You must be able to put these things aside, but you must also not hold up the performance of your duty. Be a person who works in quiet obscurity and does not show off to others while you loyally perform your duty. The more you let go of your pride and status, and the more you let go of your interests, the more at peace you will feel, the more light there will be in your heart,**

**and the more your state will improve. The more you struggle and compete, the darker your state will become. If you do not believe Me, try it and see! If you want to reverse this sort of corrupt state, and to not be controlled by these things, you must seek the truth, and clearly understand the essence of these things, and then put them aside and relinquish them”** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Freedom and Liberation Can Be Gained Only by Casting Off One’s Corrupt Disposition). God’s words gave me a path of practice. We have to learn to let go, to give up any opportunities to show off and let other people take the spotlight. Thinking on this, I sent her a message, saying, “Go ahead and host tomorrow, I’ll help with fellowship.” In the gathering the next day, I wasn’t thinking about how I was seen, but about how to fellowship on God’s words to help resolve people’s problems. Natalie and I fellowshiped together, complementing each other. Afterward, everyone said the gathering had been really beneficial for them. I gave thanks to God for this and felt the certainty and peace of practicing the truth.

## 52. Dismissed: A Wake-up Call I Needed

By Gao Ying, China

I accepted Almighty God's work of the last days in 2008. Through reading God's word, gathering and fellowshiping, I learned that in order to be saved and achieve a wonderful destination, we not only have to seek the truth, but also fulfill our duties as created beings. So, I made a silent oath to seek the truth and fulfill my duty. I noticed that certain brothers and sisters who served as church leaders or group leaders would often fellowship God's word to resolve issues in gatherings, and were always busying themselves with church work. I thought that they must have received God's commendation and been seekers of the truth to be assigned to such important duties, so I deeply admired them. On the contrary, I felt that those who performed ordinary duties which didn't require fellowshiping the truth to solve problems—such as hosting other brothers and sisters, or doing other general affairs—would not win the admiration of others, and also had a very low chance of being saved in the future. Later on, while hosting a church leader, I saw that she often fellowshiped on God's word to resolve brothers' and sisters' issues, so I thought she must certainly understand a considerable amount of truth. When I also noticed that higher-ranking leaders often gathered with her to provide fellowship on God's word, I thought the church must be cultivating her and that she had a very good chance of being saved. Green with envy, my desire to become a leader grew even stronger and I vowed to myself that I would take on an important duty in the future.

Later on, I became a watering group leader, responsible for overseeing the work of several groups. I was really pleased with this, and thought to myself, "Given that the leader assigned me to perform such an important

duty, it must mean I have some of the truth reality and am a truth-pursuer. It looks like I have a chance at being saved, after all.” Realizing this, I continually gave thanks to God. After that, I rushed around busily in the church every day, working to make sure that the newcomers laid down a strong foundation in the true way as soon as possible. But, because I didn’t fellowship the truth clearly, we continually failed to get results in our watering work, and many newcomers still weren’t regularly attending gatherings. I became even more anxious when I saw that most of the newcomers that another group leader was responsible for were regularly attending gatherings and actively performing their duties. I thought, “When our leader sees I haven’t gotten good results in my duty, will she think I don’t have the truth reality and can’t do actual work? If I’m dismissed, how will I ever get to do another duty as important as this? Won’t it be all over for me if the leader reassigns me to do some unimportant general affairs? It’s not a big deal if my brothers and sisters don’t look up to me, but if I lose my chance at a wonderful destination and outcome, that’s a serious issue! This won’t do—I’ve got to get all the watering staff together and find a way to resolve this problem as soon as possible!” After that, I started providing fellowship to each watering team, directing them to provide support to all the newcomers who weren’t attending gatherings and bring them into regular attendance within the next two weeks. However, I didn’t properly fellowship on how to resolve the actual problems and difficulties we were having with the watering work in the first place. Later on, I heard that one of the sisters had broken down in tears, saying that my fellowship hadn’t given her a path of practice and she felt very constrained by me. When she said this, not only did I not take time for self-reflection, I even continued thinking I was in the right. After three months, the groups I supervised still weren’t getting good results, and I was worried that the leader would



dismiss me. I thought that as soon as I was dismissed, that would be it for me. God's work was clearly coming to a close—if I were dismissed and eliminated, how could I attain a favorable destination and outcome? Could I still be saved? Would all my years of faith be in vain? The more I thought, the more panicked I became; I didn't know what I should do. Ultimately, I just wasn't cut out for the job and was dismissed. The leader reassigned me to host brothers and sisters based on the church's current needs.

I was completely floored when the leader delivered my reassignment. "Hosting brothers and sisters? Am I really that bad? I might not have done the best job in my watering work, but it couldn't have been so bad that I'd be reassigned to hosting. What will the brothers and sisters think of me?" When I remembered how one sister had been reassigned to hosting for the past seven years without ever getting another promotion, I became even more resistant, thinking that I'd have no chance to distinguish myself in such an ordinary duty, and that I'd never be saved. With how much I had expended myself, suffered, and made sacrifices during my years as a believer, I never thought that I'd end up being a host. What could there be to look forward to in my future? That said, it would be completely unreasonable to reject my assignment, so I would just have to submit. I became completely passive, however—when it came to finding a suitable apartment to rent, my legs felt so heavy that I could barely walk. In the midst of my suffering, I prayed several times to God, "Dear God! I know it was with Your permission that the church assigned me to host brothers and sisters, but I just can't seem to submit. I'm still not willing to do this duty and I feel weak and negative. Oh God! I know I'm in a precarious state, please save me! I don't want to go on like this." After concluding prayer, I read some of God's word: **"These days, most people are in this sort of state: In order to gain blessings, I must expend myself for God and pay**

**a price for Him. In order to gain blessings, I must abandon everything for God; I must complete what He has entrusted me with, and I must perform my duty well. This state is dominated by the intention to gain blessings, which is an example of expending oneself for God entirely for the purpose of obtaining rewards from Him and gaining a crown. Such people do not have the truth in their hearts, and it is certain that their understanding merely consists of a few words and doctrines which they show off everywhere they go. Theirs is the path of Paul. The faith of such people is an act of constant toil, and deep down they feel that the more they do, the more it will prove their loyalty to God; that the more they do, the more He will certainly be satisfied; and that the more they do, the more they will deserve to be granted a crown before God, and the greater the blessings they gain will be. They think that if they can endure suffering, preach, and die for Christ, if they can sacrifice their own lives, and if they can complete all of the duties with which God has entrusted them, then they will be those who gain the greatest blessings, and they will be certain to be granted crowns” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. How to Walk the Path of Peter). “An antichrist sees being blessed as greater than the heavens, greater than life, more important than pursuing the truth, dispositional change, or personal salvation, and more important than doing their duty well, and being a created being that is up to standard. They think that being a created being that is up to standard, doing their duty well and being saved are all paltry things that are hardly worth mentioning or remarking on, while gaining blessings is the only thing in their entire life that can never be forgotten. In whatever they encounter, no matter how great or small, they relate it to being blessed, and are incredibly cautious and attentive, and they always leave a way out for themselves. So when their duty is**

**adjusted, if it is a promotion, an antichrist will think they have hope of being blessed. If it is a demotion, from team leader to assistant team leader, or from assistant team leader to a regular group member, they predict this to be a major problem and they think their hope of gaining blessings is slim. What sort of outlook is it? Is it a proper outlook? Absolutely not. This view is absurd!”** (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Twelve: They Want to Withdraw When They Have No Status and No Hope of Gaining Blessings).

Through the exposure of God’s word, I realized that I was only living and seeking in order to gain blessings. It was only in order to gain blessings that I expended myself for God and spared no effort in performing my duty. My beliefs were no different than those of an antichrist—I thought that I had a good chance of gaining blessings as a leader, but if I were reassigned from an important duty to some insignificant duty, my chances of gaining blessings would be slim. Thinking back to when I started believing in God, I really envied the leaders, thinking they were all doing important duties, were of good caliber and pursued the truth. I believed that they would be saved and perfected by God and would certainly gain great blessings in the future. As for those that performed insignificant duties, I thought they lacked the truth reality and barely had a chance of being saved and gaining blessings. As my thoughts were dominated by this idea, I continually sought to become a leader. As a group leader, when I failed to get results in my duty, I did not reflect on myself, but instead worried about being dismissed. In order to maintain my position and achieve quick success, I even used my authority to constrain my brothers and sisters. When the church assigned me to host brothers and sisters after I was dismissed, I was completely averse to the decision. I became negative and slacked off in my duty, thinking that my future prospects would be bleak after taking on such a role. Each one of these situations plainly exposed my obsession with

gaining blessings. I realized that I only believed in God, made sacrifices and expended myself in order to gain blessings. I wasn't submitting to God and doing my duty as a created being in the slightest. I had a purely transactional relationship with God in my duty and was walking the path of an antichrist.

Later on, I came across some of God's word: **"In the house of God, there is constant mention of accepting God's commission and performing one's duty properly. How does duty come into being? To speak broadly, it comes into being as a result of God's management work of bringing salvation to humanity; to speak specifically, as God's management work unfolds among mankind, various work appears that requires people to cooperate and complete it. This has given rise to responsibilities and missions for people to fulfill, and these responsibilities and missions are the duties God bestows upon mankind. In God's house, the various tasks that require people's cooperation are the duties they should perform. So, are there differences between duties in terms of better and worse, lofty and lowly, or great and small? Such differences do not exist; as long as something has to do with God's management work, is a requirement of the work of His house, and is required by spreading God's gospel, then it is a person's duty. This is the origin and definition of duty"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. What Is the Adequate Performance of Duty?). **"For a created being to be able to fulfill the duty of a created being, to be able to satisfy the Creator, is the most beautiful thing among humankind, and is something that should be spread as a tale to be praised by all people. Anything the Creator entrusts to created beings should be unconditionally accepted by them; for humankind, this is a matter of both happiness and privilege, and for all those who fulfill the duty of a**

**created being, nothing is more beautiful or worthy of commemoration—it is something positive. And as for how the Creator treats those who can fulfill the duty of a created being, and what He promises them, this is a matter for the Creator; it is no business of created humankind. To put it a little more plainly and simply, this is up to God, and people have no right to interfere. You will get whatever God gives you, and if He gives you nothing, then there is nothing you can say about it. When a created being accepts God’s commission, and cooperates with the Creator to perform their duty and do what they can, this is not a transaction or a trade; people should not try to trade expressions of attitudes or actions and behaviors to gain any promises or blessings from God. When the Creator entrusts this work to you, it is right and proper that, as created beings, you accept this duty and commission. Is there anything transactional about this? (No.) On the Creator’s side, He is willing to entrust to each and every one of you the duties that people ought to perform; and on the created humankind’s side, people should gladly accept this duty, treating it as their life’s obligation, as the value they should live out in this life. There is no transaction here, this is not an equivalent exchange, much less does it involve any reward or other statements that people imagine. This is by no means a trade; it is not about exchanging the price people pay or the hard work they provide when performing their duty for something else. God has never said that, and it should not be understood in this way by people”** (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Nine (Part Seven)). Through God’s word, I realized that duties are commissions entrusted to people by God. The church assigns people duties based upon the church’s current demand, as well as each person’s caliber and talents. Each duty is important, as each plays a part in spreading and testifying to God’s work in the last days. No

one's duty is more important than any other—each duty is indispensable to the church's work. As such, I should accept my duty unconditionally and do it to the best of my ability. This is the conscience and reason that a created being should possess. God had graced me with the opportunity to do my duty so that I would pursue the truth while performing it, experience God's word and work, recognize and resolve my corrupt disposition, and ultimately come to fear and submit to God without being subject to the fetters and ravages of my satanic disposition. Yet, I didn't understand God's intention, ranking duties as better or worse and seeing my own duty as a means of gaining blessings. I tried to cheat and use God, fantasizing about gaining blessings as repayment for doing my duty. How selfish and despicable I was! I clearly saw that if I didn't rectify my incorrect perspective on pursuit, and didn't resolve my corrupt disposition, then no matter how important my duty was, or how much I expended myself and made sacrifices, I'd never earn God's commendation and would ultimately be eliminated and punished. Having recognized all this, I realized what a precarious state I was in and was ready to set my intentions right and do my duty well.

Later on, I read the following passages of God's word: **“There is no correlation between the duty of man and whether he is blessed or cursed. Duty is what man ought to fulfill; it is his heaven-sent vocation, and should not depend on recompense, conditions, or reasons. Only then is he doing his duty. To be blessed is when someone is made perfect and enjoys God's blessings after experiencing judgment. To be cursed is when someone's disposition does not change after they have experienced chastisement and judgment, it is when they do not experience being made perfect but are punished. But regardless of whether they are blessed or cursed, created beings should fulfill their**

**duty, doing what they ought to do, and doing what they are able to do; this is the least that a person, a person who pursues God, should do. You should not do your duty only to be blessed, and you should not refuse to act for fear of being cursed. Let Me tell you this one thing: Man's performance of his duty is what he ought to do, and if he is incapable of performing his duty, then this is his rebelliousness"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. The Difference Between the Ministry of God Incarnate and the Duty of Man). **"I decide the destination of each person not on the basis of age, seniority, amount of suffering, and least of all, the degree to which they invite pity, but according to whether they possess the truth. There is no other choice but this. You must realize that all those who do not follow the will of God shall also be punished. This is an immutable fact"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Prepare Sufficient Good Deeds for Your Destination). God's word taught me that the duty you perform has no bearing on whether you'll gain blessings or meet with misfortune. A duty is a commission from God, it is man's responsibility—it is perfectly natural and justified that one should do one's duty. The key to being saved is to seek the truth, obtain the truth and achieve dispositional transformation. It has nothing to do with what duty one does. Performing an important duty and having a high status does not mean that you have the truth reality. If you don't seek the truth, don't change your disposition, and even barter with God to gain blessings, cheat Him, use Him, and disrupt the church's work, then you too will be revealed and eliminated, never to be saved by God. Even if you've been tasked with an outwardly insignificant duty, as long as you try your hardest, seek the truth and achieve dispositional transformation, you will be saved. I thought of the various false leaders who had been revealed and eliminated—they performed important duties, gathered and fellowshiped, expended themselves,

endured suffering, and were looked up to by all the brothers and sisters. But they didn't pursue the truth, only supplied people with doctrinal knowledge. They didn't practice or experience God's word in the least; they only expended themselves and made sacrifices to gain blessings and to protect their own status and renown. Despite believing in God for years, they still didn't know themselves, or change their dispositions, and because they walked the wrong path, they were dismissed. I realized it was absurd and in contradiction with the truth of God's word to believe that those who endured suffering, expended themselves, had high standing, and performed important duties would be saved and rewarded with a wonderful destination and outcome, while those who did average, insignificant duties had a slim chance of being saved or gaining blessings. I thought of Paul, who had a high position in the church, who spread the gospel far and wide, endured great suffering and earned the admiration and respect of all, including the modern religious world that sees him as a model to learn from. Yet Paul never sought the truth, much less strive to transform his disposition, and only expended himself to gain blessings and a crown. He walked the path of resistance to God and was ultimately punished by Him. By contrast, Peter's work was not as superficially impressive as Paul's, but he pursued the truth and love of God in his duty, placed importance on knowing himself and knowing God in God's judgment and chastisement of him. Ultimately, he was nailed upside down to the cross for God, achieving submission to Him unto death and loving Him to the utmost, through which he was perfected by Him. God is holy and righteous—He won't bring those who barter with, cheat and resist Him into the kingdom, much less will He allow those of Satan's ilk who are shot through with corrupt dispositions to remain. Only those who pursue the truth and dispositional transformation, and who ultimately attain the truth and submit to God and follow His will, can enter



God's kingdom. After realizing this, I felt much more liberated and was ready to submit to God and do my best to host brothers and sisters. Just as I prepared to start hosting, however, I got a message from my leader saying that, based on the need of church work, she'd reassigned me to another church to water newcomers. When I got the message, I couldn't help but give thanks to God. I prayed to God, telling Him that I was ready to buckle down and seek the truth, focus on transforming my disposition, and diligently fulfill my duty.

Today, I've gained some recognition of my desire for blessings and my transactional relationship with God. I see how selfish and despicable I was, and am willing to submit and earnestly go about my duty as a created being. This is all due to God's salvation, and I give great thanks to God.

## **53. God's Word Eliminated My Defensiveness and Misunderstandings**

By Li Jin, China

In 2014 when I was a church leader, I was somewhat effective in doing my duty, had accumulated some experience, and felt like I understood the truth. When I ran into problems, I didn't seek the truth principles, and often did as I pleased. At that time, someone reported that the leaders of two churches had bad humanity, and suppressed and constrained others. I was biased, and believed what I heard without understanding the actual situation in detail. So I dismissed one of the leaders who could do real work, and nearly made the mistake of expelling the other leader. That seriously affected the work of both churches. The upper leaders pruned me severely for being reckless and willful in doing my duty, not handling things according to the truth principles, and dismissing and expelling people arbitrarily. But I really didn't know myself, and tried to reason with them and justify myself. After all, in doing their duty, who doesn't make mistakes? Because I didn't accept the truth, often violated principles in my work, was reckless and willful, and disrupted and disturbed the church's work, I was dismissed by the upper leaders. After I was dismissed, the upper leaders didn't arrange for me to perform any duty, and let me self-reflect. At that time, I didn't understand God's intention, and was very negative. I felt that in all these years of believing in God, I had given up my family and career, and often did my duty even when I was ill. I might not have contributed much, but I certainly worked hard. Being dismissed was one thing, but why was I not even given a duty to perform? I only made two mistakes, so wasn't treating me that way too harsh? Especially when I saw brothers and sisters who had never been leaders still doing their duty, while

I, a former leader, had no duty to perform at all, I thought: “It looks like I can’t be a leader. As a leader, you have to meet high standards and strict requirements. If one day you are a little careless, your life as a believer in God could come to an end. How can that lead to any good end and destination? No matter what, I’ll never be a leader again.” For the next few years, I always worked with texts in the church, and although there were opportunities to stand for election as a leader or worker, I always avoided participating. At the time, I wasn’t aware of my problems, and thought that was the wise thing to do.

In May of 2020 the church was going to elect leaders. My heart was in turmoil: “My work with texts is pretty good, and I don’t want to participate in the election. If I was elected to be a leader, that would be a bad thing. Being a leader is an arduous, thankless task. Doing it well is expected, and if the church’s work is delayed, the leader has to take responsibility. So it really is true that ‘Everyone reaps the benefits, but only one person takes the blame.’ Previously, when I was a leader, I committed a few transgressions. If I served as a leader again and did something that violated principles and caused great harm to the work of the church, at best, I would be dismissed. At worst, I would be expelled, and lose my chance to be saved.” With those thoughts in mind, I found an excuse and said my heart condition had worsened lately, so I couldn’t take part in the election. At the time, I felt a little guilty. “Isn’t this avoiding the election?” But I thought I really wasn’t up to being a leader, and I really did have some recent heart discomfort, so I had a reason not to go. Thinking that way helped make whatever unease and guilt I felt disappear. Later on, when there was another election, I still didn’t want to participate, feeling that being a leader was dangerous! It was a lot of work and there were a lot of problems to deal with, and I could get exposed at any time. When they weren’t leaders, some

of the brothers and sisters around me didn't appear to have any issues. But once they became leaders, some were revealed as false leaders and dismissed, while some were revealed as the wicked or antichrists, and were cleared out or expelled. It seemed that status indeed revealed who people really were! Finally, I forfeited, and didn't stand in the election.

Not long after I got home, I suddenly became ill. I had diarrhea and a fever, and taking medicine didn't help. After suffering for several days, I finally recovered. But my arms and neck then became covered in little red dots. My condition became more and more serious, and as soon as I started sweating, I felt a burning pain all over my body. After a few days I was utterly exhausted from struggling with my illness, and realized that my illness was not a coincidence—it was God's discipline. But I didn't know which way to turn to reflect and understand. I prayed to God, and asked Him to guide me to know myself and learn my lesson.

When my leader learned that I was ailing, she reminded me to reflect on my attitude toward the election, and found a passage of God's word regarding my state: **“With satanic nature ... once people gain status they are then in danger. So, what should be done? Do they have no path to follow? Once they have fallen into that dangerous situation, is there no way back for them? Tell Me, once corrupt people gain status—regardless of who they are—do they then become antichrists? Is this absolute? (If they do not pursue the truth, then they will become antichrists, but if they do pursue the truth, then they will not.) That is absolutely right: If people do not pursue the truth, they are sure to become antichrists. And is it the case that all who walk the path of antichrists do so because of status? No, it is chiefly because they have no love of the truth, because they are not right people. Regardless of whether they have status or not, people who do not pursue the truth all**

walk the path of antichrists. No matter how many sermons they have heard, such people do not accept the truth, they do not walk the right path, but are determined to go toward the crooked path. This is akin to how people eat: Some do not consume food that can nurture their bodies and support a normal existence, but instead insist on consuming things that do them harm, ultimately shooting themselves in the foot. Is this not their own choice? After being eliminated, some leaders and workers spread notions, saying, ‘Don’t be a leader, and don’t let yourself gain status. People are in danger the minute they gain any status, and God will reveal them! Once they are revealed, they will not even be qualified to be ordinary believers, and will receive no blessings at all.’ What sort of thing is that to say? At best, it represents a misunderstanding of God; at worst, it is blasphemy against Him. If you do not walk the right path, do not pursue the truth, and do not follow God’s way, but instead you insist on walking the path of antichrists and end up on Paul’s path, ultimately meeting the same outcome, the same end as Paul, still complaining about God and passing judgment on God as unrighteous, then are you not the genuine article of an antichrist? Such behavior is cursed! When people do not understand the truth, they always live by their notions and imaginings, frequently misinterpret God, and feel God’s actions to be at odds with their own notions, which produces negative emotions in them; this happens because people have corrupt dispositions. They say negative things and complain because their faith is too paltry, their stature too small, and they understand too few truths—which is all forgivable, and not remembered by God. And yet, there are those who do not walk the right path, who specifically walk the path of deceiving, resisting, betraying God, and fighting against God. These people are ultimately

punished and cursed by God, and plunged into perdition and destruction. How do they get to this point? Because they have never reflected on and known themselves, because they do not accept the truth at all, and are reckless and willful, and stubbornly refuse to repent, and even complain about God after they are revealed and eliminated, saying that God is not righteous. Could such people be saved? (No.) They could not. So, is it the case that everyone who is revealed and eliminated is beyond salvation? It cannot be said that they are utterly beyond redemption. There are those who understand too few truths, and are young and inexperienced—who, once they become leaders or workers and have status, are directed by their corrupt disposition, and pursue status, and enjoy this status, and so naturally walk the path of antichrists. If, after being exposed and judged, they are able to reflect on themselves, and truly repent, forsaking wickedness like the people of Nineveh, no longer walking the path of evil as they used to, then they still have the opportunity to be saved. But what are the conditions of such an opportunity? They must be truly repentant and able to accept the truth. If they are, they still have some hope. If they are incapable of reflecting on themselves, don't accept the truth at all, and have no intention of truly repenting, they will be **completely eliminated**" (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. How to Resolve the Temptations and Bondage of Status). After reading God's word, my leader reminded me: "You always think that as a leader, it is easy to be exposed, dismissed, or eliminated. Is that the correct point of view? Whether people are exposed and eliminated depends on whether they pursue the truth, and what path they take. It has nothing to do with whether they are leaders. If a person is a leader but doesn't pursue the truth or walk the right path, if they commit evil, disturb and disrupt the church's work,

and refuse to repent, they will definitely be exposed and eliminated. Although some leaders deviate in doing their duty and commit transgressions, if they can accept the truth, self-reflect and know themselves, and truly repent, the church will give them opportunities to continue practicing. Even if they have low caliber and are not qualified to be a leader, they will be transferred to carry out an appropriate duty. With so many leaders in the church, why do some understand more and more of the truth and perform their duty better and better? Why do some people repeatedly do evil things, get exposed as false leaders and antichrists, and end up being eliminated? Do their failures have anything to do with being a leader? The church has eliminated many evil people, many of whom were not leaders. They were eliminated because their nature was averse and hostile to the truth, they did not walk the right path, and in doing their duty they recklessly committed misdeeds, and caused disturbances and disruptions. Does that have anything to do with being a leader?"

After hearing the leader's fellowship, I was moved. She was right—just because someone becomes a leader and has status doesn't mean they will be exposed and eliminated. That happens because after people gain status they don't walk the right path, and don't pursue the truth. They only covet the benefits of status, do as they please and recklessly commit misdeeds, and cause disturbances and disruptions. That makes them false leaders and antichrists who are dismissed and eliminated. I thought of Brother Fang Xun, who was dismissed some time ago. As a leader, he always showed off, and belittled and marginalized the brothers he worked with. That made them feel constrained, so they couldn't perform their duties normally. Leaders fellowshipped with Fang Xun many times. But he never changed, and that was why he was subsequently dismissed. When I was dismissed from my position as a leader, it was also because I had often been

reckless and willful. When my brothers and sisters reported problems with two church leaders, I didn't follow principles and investigate and verify those reports. Instead, I blindly condemned them, and even dismissed one and nearly expelled the other. As a result, I harmed both leaders and caused chaos in the churches. Now, thinking back on it, everything I did was evil, disrupted the church's work, and harmed the brothers and sisters. Fortunately, those two mistakes were discovered and reversed. Otherwise, the consequences would have been disastrous! I realized my dismissal actually had nothing to do with having status or being a leader. I was dismissed because my disposition was too arrogant, when facing problems I didn't seek the truth, and I didn't do things based on principles. Instead, I acted arbitrarily and recklessly committed misdeeds, disturbing the work of the church. And when I was pruned, I didn't reflect on myself. My dismissal is consistent with principles, and shows God's righteousness. But all along, I didn't know myself. I was always defensive toward God, misunderstood Him, and thought that I was exposed because I was a leader. I was so absurd and unreasonable! I only now realized that at that time, if I wasn't immediately dismissed and prevented from doing evil, given my arrogant disposition, I might have done much greater evil! My dismissal was God's way to protect me, and also a good opportunity for me to reflect on and know myself. I also thought of Sister Wang Rui, someone I previously worked with. She had also been dismissed, but after her failure, she was able to reflect on herself, know herself, absorb lessons, and repent to God. Later, when she was a leader again she was able to seek the truth and work based on principles, and clearly made progress. After pondering these things, I understood that it is not someone's status that causes them to be revealed and eliminated—they are victims of their own corrupt dispositions. If a corrupt disposition is not resolved, even if one is not a



leader and doesn't do evil with the status of a leader, one will still be eliminated for not pursuing the truth. Once I recognized that, my state changed a bit, but I still had some concerns: "My understanding of the truth is shallow. The church has many issues that require leaders to make decisions, and if things are not arranged well, and the work of the church is disturbed and disrupted, transgressions may occur. If one is not a leader, and isn't involved in such work, that work won't cause them to do evil or oppose God. So I had better not stand in the election." After that, the leader showed me another passage of God's word: **"I do not want to see anyone feeling as though God has left them out in the cold, that God has abandoned them or disdained them. All I want to see is everyone on the road to pursuing the truth and seeking to understand God, boldly marching onward with unfaltering determination, without any misgivings or burdens. No matter what wrongs you have committed, no matter how far you have strayed or how seriously you have transgressed, do not let these become burdens or excess baggage that you have to carry with you in your pursuit of understanding God. Continue marching onward. At all times, God's intention to save man never changes. This is the most precious part of the essence of God"** (The Word, Vol. 2. On Knowing God. God Himself, the Unique VI). I was deeply moved by God's word. God will not give up on saving people because of their momentary failures and transgressions. Instead, He gives them chances to repent. People making mistakes and committing transgressions in doing their duty is nothing to be afraid of. As long as people can change, God will continue to guide them. Although I had committed a few transgressions, the church still gave me a chance to self-reflect and repent. It did not condemn me and eliminate me for those transgressions. But I did not self-reflect, remained defensive toward God and misunderstood Him, and was unwilling

to be a leader or worker. I was so stubborn! When I realized that, I felt remorse and guilt, so I prayed to God: “Oh God! I am too rebellious. I no longer wish to misunderstand You, and be defensive toward You. Now, I am willing to repent. I beg You to guide me, and correct me where I’ve been wrong.”

I then wondered why I had misunderstood God and been defensive toward Him all along. What was the root cause? At the time, my leader read a passage of God’s word that was of great benefit to me. Almighty God says: **“If you are deceitful, then you will be guarded and suspicious toward all people and matters, and thus your faith in Me will be built upon a foundation of suspicion. I could never acknowledge such faith. Lacking true faith, you are even more devoid of true love. And if you are liable to doubt God and speculate about Him at will, then you are, without question, the most deceitful of all people. You speculate whether God can be like man: unpardonably sinful, of petty character, devoid of fairness and reason, lacking a sense of justice, given to vicious tactics, treacherous and cunning, pleased by evil and darkness, and so on. Is not the reason that people have such thoughts because they lack the slightest knowledge of God? Such faith is nothing short of sin!”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. How to Know the God on Earth). God’s word made me understand that I had some defensiveness toward God and misunderstood Him because my nature was too deceitful. Having been dismissed once, I didn’t self-reflect about my former path, which led to failure, or absorb the lessons to be learned so I could avoid repeating the same mistakes. Instead, I thought that being a leader meant I would be easily exposed and eliminated, so it was the title “leader” that made me a victim. I even imagined that God was like some worldly ruler who sentences people to death once they make a small mistake. So as soon as

anyone mentioned elections I was terrified, and feared that if I were elected as a leader, then even the slightest carelessness on my part would lead to being exposed, and I wouldn't have a good destination. So I watched carefully, and kept up my defenses. I made excuse after excuse to avoid the situation, and refused to stand for election. I was so deceitful! The reason the church trains leaders and workers is to give them opportunities to practice, so they can understand the truth and enter into reality as quickly as possible. But I really thought that God meant to expose me and eliminate me. Was this not misunderstanding and blaspheming God? I believed in God, but I always saw Him through the eyes of the unrighteous, suspecting Him, and being defensive toward Him, revealing my satanic disposition. Isn't that kind of belief in God really like resisting God?

Later, after reading more of God's words, I had a somewhat better understanding of His intention. God's words say: **"At times, God uses a certain matter to reveal you or discipline you. Does this then mean that you have been eliminated? Does it mean your end has come? No. ... In fact, in many cases, people's concern stems from their own self-interest. Speaking generally, it is the fear that they will have no outcome. They're always thinking, 'What if God reveals me, eliminates me, and rejects me?' This is your misinterpretation of God; these are only your one-sided conjectures. You have to figure out what God's intention is. When He reveals people, it is not for the sake of eliminating them. People are revealed in order to expose their shortcomings, mistakes, and their nature essences, to make them know themselves and become capable of true repentance; for this reason, revealing people is in order to help their lives to grow. Without a pure understanding, people are apt to misinterpret God and become negative and weak. They may even give in to despair. In fact, being revealed by God doesn't necessarily**

**mean that you will be eliminated. It is to help you get to know your own corruption, and to make you repent. Oftentimes, because people are rebellious, and do not seek to find resolution in the truth when they reveal corruption, God must exercise discipline. And so, sometimes, He reveals people, exposing their ugliness and pitifulness, getting them to know themselves, which helps their life to grow. Revealing people has two different implications: For the evil people, being revealed means they are eliminated. For those who are able to accept the truth, it is a reminder and a warning; they are made to reflect on themselves, to see their true state, and to stop being wayward and reckless, because to carry on like this would be dangerous. Revealing people in this way is to remind them lest, in performing their duty, they grow muddleheaded and careless, fail to take things seriously, become satisfied with only a few results, and think they have performed their duty to an acceptable standard when, in fact, measured by God's demands, they have fallen far short, and yet they are still complacent and believe themselves to be doing fine. In such circumstances, God will discipline, caution, and remind people. Sometimes, God reveals their ugliness—which is patently to serve as a reminder. At such times you should reflect on yourself: Performing your duty like this is inadequate, there is rebelliousness within you, there are too many negative elements, everything you do is perfunctory, and if you still do not repent, by rights you should be punished. Now and then, when God disciplines you, or reveals you, this does not necessarily mean you will be eliminated. This matter should be approached correctly. Even if you are eliminated, you should accept it and submit to it, and make haste to reflect and repent”** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Only by Practicing the Truth and Submitting to God Can One Achieve a Change in Disposition). Reading

God's word, I was quite moved, and felt especially ashamed and guilty. God exposes, prunes, and disciplines people so that they can understand themselves, repent, and change. When I was pruned and experienced frustration and failure, I had no understanding of God's good intentions to save mankind. I just kept clinging to Satan's falsehoods and devilish words like "The bigger they are, the harder they fall" and "It's lonely at the top." I imagined that being a leader in the church was like being an official in the secular world, and that the higher one's position, the higher one's risk, and the more one was a leader, the faster one would be exposed and eliminated. Over the past few years, I always misunderstood God and was defensive toward Him, and my heart was closed to God all along. I repeatedly refused to stand in leaders' elections. Even though I was doing my duty, I had misgivings, so I couldn't give my all, and always had a lukewarm attitude toward pursuing the truth. I was trapped in Satan's snare, and suffered at Satan's hand, and I didn't even know how much it was damaging my life. Now I was in jeopardy, and could no longer afford to misunderstand and hurt God. I silently prayed to God, "Oh God, I want to repent to You and treat elections correctly. No matter whether I am elected or not, I will submit to Your arrangements."

When it was time for the election, I was still conflicted: "This time, if they really elect me, I should accept the position. But my ability to do the job and my caliber are average, so if I don't perform well, then what? It's best to let someone else do it. That way, I won't be exposed again." In my dilemma, I suddenly thought of God's word: **"When God's people perform their duty in the kingdom and created beings perform their duty before the Creator, they should move forward calmly with a God-fearing heart. They shouldn't be fumbling about, shrinking back, or walking on eggshells. If you know that this state is wrong and worry**

**about it constantly instead of seeking the truth to resolve it, then you're being constrained and bound by it, and you won't be able to fulfill your duty"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Part Three). God's word served as a reminder. I had always been anxious about elections, and at the critical moment, I wanted to retreat and escape again. For created beings, doing one's duty is right and proper—it's an honor. But in fact, I avoided responsibility, was timid, defensive, and suspicious. It was so foolish and pathetic! I had to turn back to God, be a simple and honest person, stop worrying about my future and final destination, and give my heart to Him. Whether I was elected or not, I could no longer run away and hide. If I was elected I had to accept it, and perform my duty well. When I fully committed to this mindset, I felt a great weight lifted from my heart, and I was relieved of my burden.

This time when the election results came out, I and another sister were chosen. I was no longer mired in misunderstanding and defensiveness toward God, and no longer feared being eliminated if I didn't perform my duty well. Instead, I wanted to cherish this opportunity, do my best to do my duty well, and repay what I owed to God. Later, I read God's word: **"Are you afraid of walking the path of antichrists? (Yes.) Is fear useful on its own? No—fear alone cannot fix the problem. It is normal to be afraid of walking the path of antichrists. It shows one to be a lover of the truth, someone who is willing to strive toward the truth and who is willing to pursue it. If you are fearful at heart, then you should seek the truth and find the path of practice. You must begin by learning to cooperate with others in harmony. If there is a problem, resolve it with fellowship and discussion, so that everyone may know the principles, as well as the specific reasoning and program regarding the resolution. Does this not keep you from making decisions alone? Additionally, if**

**you have a God-fearing heart, then you will naturally be capable of receiving God's scrutiny, but you must also learn to accept the supervision of God's chosen people, which requires you to have tolerance and acceptance. ... It is certainly necessary to accept supervision, but the main thing is to pray to God and rely on Him, subjecting yourself to constant examination. Especially when you have gone the wrong way or done something wrong, or when you are about to act or decide something on your own, and someone nearby mentions it and alerts you, you need to accept that and hasten to reflect on yourself, and admit to your mistake, and correct it. This can keep you from setting foot on the path of antichrists. If there is someone helping and alerting you in this way, are you not being protected without knowing it? You are—that is your protection”** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. The Proper Fulfillment of Duty Requires Harmonious Cooperation).

God's word points out the principle of practice that helps to avoid taking the wrong path: Seek the truth no matter what problems you face, discuss things together with your brothers and sisters, cooperate harmoniously, and do your duty according to the truth principles; do not act arbitrarily based on your arrogant disposition and do not make decisions unilaterally, and while doing your duty, accept supervision from your brothers and sisters. If you do not do your duty only because you fear walking the path of an antichrist and are afraid of being revealed, that will not only fail to resolve problems, but will also ruin your chance to gain the truth and be saved. Isn't that like giving up eating altogether because you're afraid of choking? Thereafter, I absorbed the lessons of my previous failures, and when I did my duty, I had a much more correct attitude. If I ran into problems, I could consciously discuss with everyone, cooperate harmoniously, and seek the

truth principles together. After some time, I saw God's guidance, and did my duty effectively.

This experience compelled me to self-reflect and know my own corrupt disposition, which allowed me to understand God's intention, eliminate my misunderstanding of God and defensiveness toward Him, and perform my duty with ease. Thanks be to God!



## 54. In the Midst of Danger

By Li Xin, China

In December 2011, brothers and sisters from several churches were arrested one after another. Our church arranged for Sister Chen Xi, Sister Liang Xin and I to handle the aftermath separately. On the 25th, just after lunch, I received a phone call. The voice on the other end of the phone spoke with great urgency and said, “Li Xin, it’s bad news!” When I heard Chen Xi say this, my heart leapt into my throat. She told me in coded language that that morning, Liang Xin had been arrested by the police, who had also seized the church’s money. Chen Xi said that she was probably being followed, and asked me to find a way to deal with the aftermath and leave quickly.

I slumped on the sofa and thought, “The police must have been following and monitoring us for a while, and they came prepared. I know there is a place where church books and property are stored. Chen Xi and Liang Xin have both been there. I have to quickly move these things to a safe place, or the police could seize them at any moment.” But then I thought to myself, “That place might have been discovered by the police too, if I go now, won’t I just be delivering myself to them? If I am captured, the police will definitely torture me. If I can’t stand the torture and betray God, I will not attain a good ending and destination, won’t I?” The more I thought about it, the more frightened I became. I thought it might be better for me to stay where I was and wait for things to calm down. But I felt especially uneasy, because now that the interests of the church had suffered losses, I had a responsibility to protect them. How could I let myself be a coward at this time? I was torn between my own safety and the interests of the church, and I didn’t know what to do. But then, I recalled a passage of

God's words: **"When you perform your duty, you are thinking of your own interests, of your own personal safety, of the members of your family. What have you ever done that was for Me? When have you ever thought of Me? When have you ever devoted yourself, at any cost, to Me and My work? Where is the evidence of your compatibility with Me? Where is the reality of your loyalty to Me?"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. You Should Seek the Way of Compatibility With Christ). God's word precisely revealed my state. Faced with being arrested and persecuted by the great red dragon, what I thought of wasn't to be considerate of God's intentions or to protect the work of the church. Instead, I thought only of my own interests. I was terrified of being arrested and tortured, and I was even more afraid the torture would break me, I would become a Judas, and I would thereby never attain a good ending and destination. All of my fears were to safeguard my own interests. At this critical moment, to protect myself, I disregarded the interests of the church and wanted to shirk my duty. I was so selfish and despicable! No matter how vicious the police might be, they were still in God's hands, and without God's permission, they couldn't harm a single hair on my head. With this in mind, I felt calmer and less afraid. I thought of how the Lord Jesus was crucified to complete the work of redemption for all humankind. Why was the Lord Jesus able to unwaveringly lay down His life to complete God's commission? I looked up the relevant parts of God's word to read, which said: **"Jesus was able to complete God's commission—the work of all mankind's redemption—because He showed consideration for God's intentions, without making any plans or arrangements for Himself. So, too, was He the intimate of God—God Himself—which is something you all understand very well. (Actually, He was the God Himself who was testified to by God. I mention this here to use the fact of Jesus to illustrate the issue.) He was**

able to place God's management plan at the very center, and always prayed to the heavenly Father and sought the will of the heavenly Father. He prayed and said: 'God the Father! Accomplish that which is Your will, and act not according to My desires but according to Your plan. Man may be weak, but why should You care for him? How could man be worthy of Your concern, man who is like an ant in Your hand? In My heart, I wish only to fulfill Your will, and I would that You can do what You would do in Me according to Your own desires.' On the road to Jerusalem, Jesus was in agony, as if a knife were being twisted in His heart, yet He had not the slightest intention of going back on His word; always there was a powerful force compelling Him onward to where He would be crucified. Ultimately, He was nailed to the cross and became the likeness of sinful flesh, completing the work of the redemption of mankind. He broke free of the shackles of death and Hades. Before Him, mortality, hell, and Hades lost their power, and **were vanquished by Him**" (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. How to Serve in Harmony With God's Intentions). After reading this passage of God's words, I was quite touched. To redeem humankind, who lived under Satan's power, the Lord Jesus allowed Himself to be crucified and became the sin offering for humankind, enduring so much pain and humiliation. He prioritized fulfilling God's commission above all, without conditions or excuses, and without regard to His gains or losses. Meanwhile, when a duty came upon me, I didn't try to consider God's intentions or fulfill my responsibility. I thought only about my own safety and final destination. At that moment, I was ashamed of myself, and I felt especially remorseful and indebted to God. I immediately fell to my knees and prayed to God to repent.

At that moment, I recalled a hymn of God's word, which I often liked to sing. This song was Peter's prayer when he was in extreme torment

during his trial.

## **I Wish to Dedicate My Entire Life to God**

**1 ... You know what I can do, and You further know what role I can play. I wish to put myself at the mercy of Your orchestrations, and I will dedicate everything I have to You.**

**2 Only You know what I can do for You. Although Satan fooled me so much and I rebelled against You, I believe You do not remember me for those transgressions and that You do not treat me based on them. I wish to dedicate my entire life to You. I ask for nothing, and neither do I have other hopes or plans; I only wish to act according to Your intentions and to follow Your will. I will drink from Your bitter cup, and I am Yours to command.**

—The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. How Peter Came to Know Jesus

Peter's prayer touched and inspired me. God knew my stature and what duties I was capable of performing, and since this duty had come to me, I knew I should fulfill it without hesitation. This is when I found my determination to put aside my personal interests and consider God's intentions. The next day, I rushed to move the books and property. At the time, I was very worried. I was afraid something might go wrong on the way, so I continuously prayed to God. I thought of God's word: **"Do not fear, the Almighty God of hosts will surely be with you; He stands behind you and He is your shield"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Utterances of Christ in the Beginning, Chapter 26). These words of God immediately gave me faith. I was completely in the hands of God, and it was up to God whether there would be danger on the way. My job was to finish my task to the best of my ability and do what I could. With God as

my support, I had nothing to fear. Later, when the books and property were moved to a safe place, my heart finally settled down.

A year later, in December 2012, I found myself in a period in which the gospel was spreading profusely, and many people all over the country were accepting the work of Almighty God. The Communist Party was furious. It used its media mouthpieces to attack and smear The Church of Almighty God, and frantically suppressed and arrested brothers and sisters. In the town where I lived, more than ten brothers and sisters were arrested. One day, when I was out of town for a gathering, I suddenly received a phone call from Sister Tian Hui. She said nervously, “It’s bad news, something happened....” I realized she probably couldn’t tell me clearly on the phone, so I hung up and raced back. After I met with Tian Hui, I learned that the police were searching for two sisters who were spreading the gospel. The police had posted wanted notices for them on propaganda boards, telephone poles, factory gates, and all over the streets. They also used their photos to check passing vehicles and pedestrians one by one at the county intersections. Tian Hui told me that the brothers and sisters had helped these two sisters find a temporary place to hide. However, many family members of our brothers and sisters heard the news that the government was ramping up its arrests of the faithful, and they were very worried that their family members would also be arrested, so they kept the brothers and sisters at home and did not allow them to come out for gatherings. I discussed what to do with Tian Hui, and we decided to water and support the brothers and sisters separately, so that everyone could understand the truth, not be constrained by the dark forces of the great red dragon, and be able to stand firm in such an environment.

One day, I went to support a sister, and by the time we finished our fellowship, it was already after midnight. I walked alone on the quiet and

empty road, thinking to myself, “I’ve had to support this sister so late into the night, and there are still so many brothers and sisters who need to be watered and supported. The environment is harsh right now, so if I keep running about from house to house like this, and I get caught, I don’t know what kind of torture the police will use on me. Will the Communist Party beat me to death because it hates people who believe in God? If I am beaten to death, I won’t be able to see the beauty of the kingdom come into being, will I? Performing this duty is too dangerous! Nobody explicitly arranged for me to support my brothers and sisters right now, so why am I taking this risk?” The more I thought about it, the more frightened I became. When I got home, I received a letter from a sister. She and more than a dozen brothers and sisters had been arrested for preaching the gospel. She had just been released. She said in the letter that the brothers and sisters in prison told us not to worry about them. Although they were arrested, imprisoned, and suffering some hardship, they felt that it was an honor to be persecuted for preaching the gospel. The sister also said that after a while, once she was sure the police stopped following and monitoring her, she would continue to preach the gospel. When I read her letter, I felt very guilty. These brothers and sisters were suffering in prison, but instead of complaining, they saw being persecuted for preaching the gospel as a glory. Then I thought about myself. I was merely supporting my brothers and sisters and doing some work to handle things in the aftermath of a wave of arrests, but I was always worried that I would be arrested and beaten to death. All I thought about was my own interests, ending, and destination. The more I thought about it, the more remorseful and guilty I felt. I was so selfish and despicable, and was unworthy of God’s watering and sustenance. This is when I recalled a passage of God’s word: **“I admire the lilies blooming in the hills; the flowers and grasses stretch across the**

slopes, but the lilies add luster to My glory on earth before the arrival of spring—can man achieve such things? Could he testify to Me on earth prior to My return? Could he dedicate himself for the sake of My name in the country of the great red dragon?” (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. God’s Words to the Entire Universe, Chapter 34). I also read another passage: **“Because it is embarked upon in a land that opposes God, all of God’s work faces tremendous obstacles, and accomplishing many of His words takes time; thus, people are refined as a result of God’s words, which is also part of suffering. It is tremendously difficult for God to carry out His work in the land of the great red dragon—but it is through this difficulty that God does one stage of His work, making manifest His wisdom and His wondrous deeds, and using this opportunity to make this group of people complete”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Is the Work of God As Simple As Man Imagines?). After contemplating God’s words, I understood a little bit about God’s intention. God allows the great red dragon to persecute us to perfect our faith and submission. In the last days, God perfects a group of people into overcomers, who, no matter how dangerous or awful the situation is, can keep to their duties, practice the truth, and stand firm in testimony. This was the time I needed to stand firm in testimony to God, but for the sake of my own safety, I wanted to abandon my duty and flee this situation. I was truly selfish and despicable! I thought about the flowers and plants on the roadside. No matter how severe the cold or heat, no matter how harsh the environment, so long as it is the season God has ordained for them to grow, they grow and bloom, bearing witness to the deeds of the Creator. So why did I become pained and weak the moment the situation became even a little difficult? Why couldn’t I fulfill a little of the duty of a created being? I was truly inferior to the flowers and plants by the roadside. How could I be

worthy to live in God's presence? I felt very remorseful, so I reflected on myself: Why, every time I encountered the arrest and persecution of the great red dragon and needed to fulfill my duty, did I only consider my own interests and fail to stand up to safeguard the work of the church?

Later, I read a passage of God's word: **"God is forever supreme and ever honorable, while man is forever base, forever worthless. This is because God is forever making sacrifices and devoting Himself to mankind; man, however, forever takes and strives only for himself. God is forever taking pains for mankind's survival, yet man never contributes anything for the sake of the light or for justice. Even if man makes an effort for a time, it cannot withstand a single blow, for the effort of man is always for his own sake and not for others. Man is always selfish, while God is forever selfless. God is the source of all that is just, good, and beautiful, while man is he who succeeds to and makes manifest all ugliness and evil. God will never alter His essence of justice and beauty, yet man is perfectly capable, at any time and in any situation, of betraying justice and straying far from God"** (The Word, Vol. 1.

The Appearance and Work of God. It Is Very Important to Understand God's Disposition). After reading this passage of God's words, I was deeply moved. To save humankind from Satan's power, God became flesh twice, and no matter how much humiliation or suffering He endured, God has always expressed the truth and worked for people's salvation, and He has never given up on His goal of saving people. His essence is selfless and good. Meanwhile, I lived by satanic philosophies like "Every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost" and "Never lift a finger without a reward," I always considered my own interests first in everything, and I failed to consider the work of the church at all. When something didn't require any great suffering, and didn't involve my future and destination, I could expend



myself or forsake a little. As soon as I was faced with the threat of being arrested and persecuted, I was constantly afraid of being captured, afraid of being beaten to death, and afraid of never attaining a good ending and destination. Time and time again, I wanted to abandon my duty. I didn't think about the negativity and weakness of my brothers and sisters, nor did I think about God's worries. I only considered my own interests. How could I be said to have a conscience? As I thought of this, I felt particularly ashamed, so I knelt and prayed to God, "God! I am selfish, despicable, and I have no humanity. I wish to repent to You, and to water and support my brothers and sisters." After I prayed, I thought of another hymn of God's word:

### **You Should Forsake All for the Truth**

**1 You must suffer hardship for the truth, you must give yourself to the truth, you must endure humiliation for the truth, and to gain more of the truth you must undergo more suffering. This is what you should do. You must not throw away the truth for the sake of a peaceful family life, and you must not lose your life's dignity and integrity for the sake of momentary enjoyment.**

**2 You should pursue all that is beautiful and good, and you should pursue a path in life that is more meaningful. If you lead such a vulgar life, and do not pursue any objectives, do you not waste your life? What can you gain from such a life? You should forsake all enjoyments of the flesh for the sake of one truth, and should not throw away all truths for the sake of a little enjoyment. People like this have no integrity or dignity; there is no meaning to their existence!**

—The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. The Experiences of Peter: His Knowledge of Chastisement and Judgment

Pondering the words of God, I felt deeply stirred. Even if one day I was actually arrested and imprisoned, or even tortured to death, it would still be a death in martyrdom to the performance of the duty of a created being, which is an honorable thing. Being able to transcend the constraint of death and fulfill the duty of a created being is a powerful and resounding testimony, a hundred times better than living trapped in my corrupt disposition and dragging out an ignoble existence. Once I realized these things, I felt a deep sense of release.

The next day, we invited a few brothers and sisters to gather together. Through fellowship on God's words, everyone came to understand that God's wisdom is exercised based on Satan's tricks, that God allows persecution and tribulations to come to us to perfect our faith, and that the great red dragon is only a service object in God's work. After this fellowship, everyone was willing to fulfill their duties to support the other brothers and sisters. When I saw the brothers and sisters emerge from their negativity and weakness and become stronger, I was especially moved. I saw that no hostile force can suppress the authority and power of God's words. After experiencing this wave of persecution and arrests, everyone had more faith in God, and I knew that this was all by the grace of God. I recalled God's word: **"Proof of the great red dragon's progressive collapse can be seen in the continued maturation of God's people; this is obvious and visible to anyone. The maturation of God's people is a sign of the enemy's demise"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Interpretations of the Mysteries of "God's Words to the Entire Universe," Chapter 10). God used the frantic arrests of the great red dragon in His service to perfect His chosen people. Through its persecution, God perfected the faith and submission of my brothers and sisters, and everyone made progress in their lives. This is precisely the effect that God's work aims to achieve. As I saw

God's words fulfilled, my faith grew, and my motivation to perform my duty was greater than ever.

Shortly after this incident, I received news that the police had located the town where the two wanted sisters were hiding through telephone surveillance, and they were going house to house to find them. The police also set up search checkpoints along the road. Some brothers and sisters took the risk to bring the two sisters to a cave dwelling outside the town. The weather was very cold those two days, the two sisters were exhausted from hiding and living on the run, and they couldn't get anything to eat, so it was impossible for them to stay in the cave for long. We needed to rescue them. I thought, "There are wanted notices for my sisters posted all over the street, and the police are checking passing vehicles. If we try to drive out with the sisters and are caught by the police, we will definitely be charged with harboring fugitives. Once the police arrest us, we will be beaten to within an inch of our lives, and if I end up being beaten to death, how will I pursue the truth and be saved?" When that thought crossed my mind, I realized I was being selfish, despicable, and thinking only of myself again, so I immediately said a silent prayer to God and asked Him to protect my heart so that I could stand on His side without considering personal interests. At that moment, I thought of a passage of God's words: **"There is no correlation between the duty of man and whether he is blessed or cursed. Duty is what man ought to fulfill; it is his heaven-sent vocation, and should not depend on recompense, conditions, or reasons. Only then is he doing his duty. To be blessed is when someone is made perfect and enjoys God's blessings after experiencing judgment. To be cursed is when someone's disposition does not change after they have experienced chastisement and judgment, it is when they do not experience being made perfect but are punished. But regardless of**

**whether they are blessed or cursed, created beings should fulfill their duty, doing what they ought to do, and doing what they are able to do; this is the least that a person, a person who pursues God, should do. You should not do your duty only to be blessed, and you should not refuse to act for fear of being cursed. Let Me tell you this one thing: Man's performance of his duty is what he ought to do, and if he is incapable of performing his duty, then this is his rebelliousness"** (The

Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. The Difference Between the Ministry of God Incarnate and the Duty of Man). Performing one's duty is the vocation of a created being, and we should demand no conditions in doing this. No matter how dangerous the environment, or whether we have a good ending and destination, we should fulfill our duty. This is the reason that a created being should possess. It was my duty to protect my sisters. Even if I was captured as I escorted my sisters and was beaten to death, I would die for the sake of performing my duty as a created being, which is something glorious! Having come to understand God's intention, I went out to rescue the two sisters with others. We hid them in the trunk of the car, and out of fear that the police would discover us, we avoided the main roads and took a small road through the forest. For the entire trip, I kept praying to God and asking Him to protect us. After about an hour or so, we successfully brought our sisters to their destination, and it felt like a great weight lifted from me. As we raced back to the county, our car was stopped by the police, but there was no one they were looking for in the car, so they let us go. It was a close call!

Through my experience, I saw that to tear down God's work, suppress and arrest believers in God, the Communist Party has reached the point of madness, but no matter how frantic it becomes, it is still subject to God's sovereign arrangements, and it is only a service object in God's hands. I

also finally understood what God meant by saying: **“In all of My plans, the great red dragon is My foil, My enemy, and also My servant; as such, I have never relaxed My ‘requirements’ of it. Therefore, the final stage of the work of My incarnation is completed in its household—this is more conducive to the great red dragon doing service for Me properly, through which I will conquer it and complete My plan”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. God’s Words to the Entire Universe, Chapter 29). In the last days, it is of great significance that God carries out His work in China, the lair of the great red dragon. God uses the service of the great red dragon to perfect our faith and perfect a group of people into overcomers. God is truly wise! Thanks be to Almighty God!

## 55. The Reality Behind People Pleasers

By Su Jie, China

In October 2020, I was chosen to supervise the video work alongside Wang Li, who I'd worked with before. I knew that she was kind of preoccupied with her reputation and status, and that she'd fall out with anyone who offended her. But we got along well enough, without any major conflicts. Later, I found out that she had developed a bias against one of the sisters from the group, Xin Cheng. When Wang Li started telling me about the state of everybody in the group, she took on a disdainful tone and said, "Xin Cheng doesn't have good humanity and is incredibly arrogant. When I give her suggestions, she not only refuses to accept them, but instead starts talking about my problems. She doesn't play a positive role in the team. I've already written a letter to the leader reporting her problems and gathered assessments from the others, we are getting ready to dismiss her." I read the assessments, and most of the brothers and sisters said that Xin Cheng was talented in her duty and had good caliber, but that her disposition was a little arrogant. They said that she would sometimes cling to her own opinion when they were discussing work, but if you fellowshiped with her clearly, she was able to accept it. All in all, she could still be cultivated. I was thinking, "Wang Li's assessment of her wasn't objective or fair, and Xin Cheng shouldn't be casually dismissed because of this. Did Xin Cheng refute Wang Li's ideas in a way that embarrassed her, so Wang Li became biased against her and wanted to have her dismissed? If so, Wang Li should reflect on herself." At this thought I wanted to point this problem out to her, but then I thought, "She cares so much about saving face—will she dislike me after I do that? How would we get along if our relationship sours?" So I said to her tactfully, "Xin Cheng's

new to the faith, and she is a little headstrong, but her problems aren't serious enough to dismiss her. Let's help her through fellowship." Hearing this, Wang Li's expression changed completely, and she said, annoyed, "Xin Cheng's problem isn't that she's headstrong, it's that she has a bad disposition. I used to think the same thing as you, but now I can discern things clearly. Help her if you want to. You can take responsibility for her work from now on." I didn't really know what to do when I heard this. I thought, "I've just joined the team and I'm still not familiar with things. Wang Li's pushed her responsibility onto me, and this could hold up our work. That was a pretty irresponsible thing to do." I wanted to share more of my thoughts with her, but seeing how cold she was being, I was scared of further conflict disrupting our rapport, so I kept my mouth shut.

A few days later, we were getting ready to change locations due to the needs of our work. Wang Li said to me out of the blue, "Let's not take Xin Cheng this time. She should stay here and reflect." I was very surprised. How was having her stay here any different from dismissing her? Doing this would hold up our work and would be unfair to her. I was worried when I saw Wang Li was acting on her corrupt disposition, and I wanted to expose her for abusing her power to ostracize and oppress Xin Cheng. But I thought of how she'd been really resistant and had a bad attitude toward me when we discussed Xin Cheng the other day, so if I dissected and exposed the essence of her actions directly to her, she might say I was protecting Xin Cheng and being difficult with her. If it spoiled our relationship and she resented me and shut me out, how could we possibly work together? I hesitated, and swallowed what I was about to say. I figured, "Forget it. I shouldn't expose her directly. I'll just leave it." So I stammered out, "The leader hasn't confirmed any change to her duty. Is it appropriate for us to leave her here? Shouldn't we wait for the leader's approval before

dismissing her? Let's have her come with us. It'll also make it easier to follow up on the work." Wang Li didn't insist anymore after I said that. I knew I hadn't clearly addressed her problem, and that she'd keep targeting Xin Cheng. I felt guilty about it, but then I thought, "Since we are partners, I'll just keep a close watch on her and stop her from causing any major mistakes." After that, she kept intentionally excluding Xin Cheng. One time, there was a professional training opportunity, and as Xin Cheng was a quick study, the best option was to send her for training, and then have her teach others when she came back. But Wang Li insisted on sending another sister who didn't know that area of work well. I also learned from the others that Xin Cheng had expressed views contrary to Wang Li's several times, and everyone felt like Xin Cheng's ideas were good, but Wang Li refused to accept them, and insisted that Xin Cheng listen to her. After Xin Cheng brought up her problems in a gathering, Wang Li got angry and ignored her. When Wang Li saw that Xin Cheng had problems in her duty, she wouldn't help her resolve them, leaving Xin Cheng with no path to follow in her work, making things hard for her. I was really uncomfortable when I learned about all this. Wang Li had always been biased, exclusionary, and repressive toward Xin Cheng. This was quite a serious problem. It was already becoming disruptive and obstructing the work. I knew I had to talk to Wang Li. That day, I mustered up some courage and said, "You haven't let go of your bias against Xin Cheng, have you? Xin Cheng is good at learning new techniques. By not letting her go, you're being biased." The moment I said this she got a dark look on her face and said angrily, "I've already let go of my bias against her, but now I have one against you. The project that Xin Cheng is responsible for isn't achieving anything, and it's her problem. I told you ages ago we should dismiss her, but you disagreed." I saw that Wang Li had no self-knowledge. As a supervisor, she didn't



reflect on herself when the work wasn't going well, and just shirked the responsibility. I was pretty mad, and I really wanted to expose the essence of her actions directly. But seeing how resistant she was, I held back. I felt kind of constrained, I thought, "I've just spoken a few words of truth to her, but she's already developed such a critical opinion of me. If I really brought all of her problems to light, she'd be furious. That would definitely ruin our relationship. It'd be better not to say more, and besides, I've already admonished her a bit. Since she won't accept it, I'll just drop it." After that, due to some work reassignments, I was mainly in charge of other work and saw less of Wang Li.

Surprisingly, about three weeks later, Wang Li's work had still not yielded results, and the team members were feeling weak and down. They reported that when she saw them not doing well in their duty, Wang Li just chided them, but didn't fellowship with them or guide them. They all felt constrained by her, and so negative that they didn't know how to do their duty. They also said she hadn't been guiding Xin Cheng's work for months. They all had tears in their eyes when they told me this. I couldn't keep calm any longer. I'd seen Wang Li's problems a long time before, but I hadn't pointed out the nature of these issues to her. She had no understanding of her own corrupt disposition, and she kept ostracizing people because of her biases and refusing to listen to others' advice, to the point that the work was nearly at a standstill. I felt so guilty. When I got home, I read a passage of God's words exposing antichrists: **"To all appearances, the antichrists' words seem especially kind, cultured, and distinguished. No matter who violates principle or disrupts and disturbs church work, the antichrist does not expose or criticize these people; they turn a blind eye, letting people think they are magnanimous in all matters. Regardless of what corruptions people reveal and what evil deeds they**

**do, the antichrist is understanding and tolerant. They do not grow angry, or fly into a rage, they will not get cross and blame people when they do something wrong and harm the interests of God’s house. No matter who commits evil and disturbs the work of the church, they pay no heed, as if this has nothing to do with them, and they will never offend people because of it. What are the antichrists most concerned with? With how many people think highly of them, and with how many people see them when they suffer, and praise them for it. The antichrists believe that suffering must never be for nothing; no matter what hardship they endure, what price they pay, what good deeds they do, how caring, considerate, and loving they are toward others, this must all be carried out in front of others so that more people can see it. And what is their aim in acting thus? To buy people’s favor, to make more people approve of their actions, their conduct, and their character in their hearts, giving a thumbs up. There are even antichrists that try to establish an image of themselves as ‘a good person’ through this outwardly good behavior, so that more people come to them looking for help”** (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Nine (Part Ten)). Antichrists won’t step in when they see people disrupting the work of the church, so that they can establish a good image of themselves among others—they’re really selfish and despicable. Thinking back on my own behavior, I realized I was acting just like an antichrist. The church arranged for me to work with Wang Li, so we could make up for each other’s weaknesses, keep an eye on each other, and protect the church’s work together. But to protect my “harmonious” relationship with Wang Li, and to maintain my image as a “nice person” with her, I didn’t dare expose her exclusionary, repressive treatment of Xin Cheng. I saw her treatment of others was based on her corrupt disposition and was impacting the work,

but I didn't stick to the truth principles and step in or report it to a leader. I was afraid she'd dislike me and it would drive a wedge between us. Even when I got the courage to say something to her in fellowship, I still held back, not directly and clearly pointing out the essence of her behavior. I always made allowances for her. I stood by and watched her exclude and repress the brothers and sisters, which harmed their life entry and seriously hindered the church's work, and yet I didn't lift a finger to help. I finally saw clearly that people pleasers may seem to be good people from the outside and don't offend anyone, but in reality they are more slippery and deceitful. Everything they do is to protect themselves, to maintain name and status. They use surface kindness to win over people's hearts and rope people in. They reveal an evil disposition that is the same as an antichrist's. Reflecting on my actions and conduct, I felt really guilty, and I hated myself. How could I have been so slippery, so deceitful? I was doing such an important duty, but I was irresponsible and didn't stick to the principles when I saw problems, damaging the church's work and hindering the lives of others. Wasn't I harming the church's interests by doing this? I truly had no conscience! I prayed and repented to God that I wanted to stop being rebellious and hurting Him, and that I wanted to practice the truth and protect the work of the church.

The next day, as soon as I brought up the work Xin Cheng was responsible for, Wang Li's expression darkened immediately and she started complaining about Xin Cheng bringing the others into negativity. I saw she wasn't reflecting on herself at all, and that she was shifting all the blame onto Xin Cheng. I thought, "I've hardly gotten started and she's already angry. If I bring up all her work problems, she'll definitely be annoyed with me. Should I carry on talking?" I hesitated and felt kind of constrained, so I said a silent prayer and thought about how God requires us to be honest and

protect the interests of God's house. This gave me some courage. No matter what she thought, I knew I had to share my honest opinion. So, I sternly and justly exposed how she was oppressing and punishing Xin Cheng. But she was having none of it. She just kept arguing about who was right and who was wrong. She refused to accept the truth whatsoever or know herself. I saw how serious her problem was, and that she couldn't stay in that duty, so I reported this to our leader. The leader said she'd tried to help Wang Li by fellowshipping with her on this many times before, but she still hadn't changed. Her behavior showed she didn't have good humanity and wouldn't accept the truth, and that she was unfit for the work. She therefore had to be dismissed as soon as possible. Moreover, the leader wanted me to do it. I felt a flutter in my heart, and thought, "Her attitude toward me has been different ever since I exposed her problems. If I go to personally dismiss her, that will seriously offend her. Would she hate me after that? Would she think I'm targeting her?" I felt conflicted and didn't know how to face her. As I was fretting over this, I read God's words: **"Most people wish to pursue and practice the truth, but much of the time they merely have a resolution and the desire to do so; the truth has not become their life. As a result, when they come across evil forces or encounter evil people and bad people committing evil deeds, or false leaders and antichrists doing things in a way that violates principles—thus disturbing the work of the church and harming God's chosen ones—they lose the courage to stand up and speak out. What does it mean when you have no courage? Does it mean that you are timid or inarticulate? Or is it that you do not understand thoroughly, and therefore do not have the confidence to speak up? Neither; this is primarily the consequence of being constrained by corrupt dispositions. One of the corrupt dispositions you reveal is a deceitful disposition;**

when something happens to you, the first thing you think of is your own interests, the first thing you consider is the consequences, whether this will be beneficial to you. This is a deceitful disposition, is it not? Another is a selfish and base disposition. You think, 'What does a loss to the interests of God's house have to do with me? I'm not a leader, so why should I care? It's got nothing to do with me. It's not my responsibility.' Such thoughts and words are not something that you consciously think, but are produced by your subconscious—which is the corrupt disposition revealed when people encounter an issue. ... You have no power over what you say and do. Even if you wanted to, you could not tell the truth or say what you really think; even if you wanted to, you could not practice the truth; even if you wanted to, you could not fulfill your responsibilities. Everything you say, do, and practice is a lie, and you're just perfunctory. You are wholly shackled and controlled by your satanic disposition. You may want to accept and practice the truth, but it's not up to you. When your satanic dispositions control you, you say and do whatever your satanic disposition tells you to do. You are nothing but a puppet of corrupt flesh, you have become a tool of Satan. Afterward, you feel regret at having once again followed the corrupt flesh and how you could have failed to practice the truth. You think to yourself, 'I can't overcome the flesh on my own and must pray to God. I didn't stand up to stop those who were disturbing the work of the church, and my conscience is weighing on me. I've made up my mind that, when this happens again, I must stand up to and prune those who are committing misdeeds in the performance of their duties and disturbing the work of the church, so that they behave themselves and stop acting recklessly.' After finally mustering the courage to speak up, you get scared and back down as

soon as the other person gets angry and bangs on the table. Are you able to be in charge? What use are determination and will? They're both useless. You must have encountered many incidents such as these: When you run into difficulties you throw in the towel, you feel that you can't do anything and give yourself up as hopeless, you abandon yourself to despair and decide that there is no hope for you, and that this time, you have been completely eliminated. You admit that you do not pursue the truth, so why do you not repent? Have you practiced the truth? Surely you cannot have understood nothing, after attending sermons for several years. Why don't you practice the truth at all? You never seek the truth, let alone practice it. You are merely constantly praying, making resolutions, setting aspirations, and pledging in your heart. And what is the outcome? You remain a people pleaser, you are not forthcoming about the problems you encounter, you do not care about evil people when you see them, you do not respond when someone does evil or creates a disturbance, and you remain aloof when you are not affected personally. You think, 'I don't talk about anything that doesn't concern me. As long as it doesn't hurt my interests, my vanity, or my image, I disregard everything without exception. I have to be very careful, as the bird that sticks its neck out is the one that gets shot. I'm not going to do anything stupid!' You are totally and unwaveringly controlled by your corrupt dispositions of wickedness, deceitfulness, hardness, and aversion to the truth. They have grown harder for you to bear than the tightening golden headband worn by the Monkey King. Living under the control of corrupt dispositions is so **exhausting and excruciating!**" (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Part Three). God's words pierced my heart like a knife. I reflected on how I was always afraid of offending Wang Li and didn't dare practice the truth

and reveal the facts. I was controlled by these satanic dispositions of being evil, deceitful, and averse to the truth. I was treating the satanic philosophies for worldly dealings such as “Harmony is a treasure; forbearance is brilliance,” “If you strike others, don’t strike them in the face; if you call others out, don’t call out their shortcomings,” “When you know something is wrong, it is better to say less,” and “Being frank annoys others” as laws to live by. I didn’t dare speak up about the problems I saw, stick to principles, or protect the work of the church. I was living a cowardly life. When the leader wanted me to dismiss Wang Li, it was very clear to me that it had to be done right away, otherwise the church’s work would be delayed. But I couldn’t open my mouth, afraid of offending her. On the outside, it looked like I was nice and didn’t want to hurt anybody, but I was actually selling out the interests of the church in exchange for maintaining a positive image in the hearts of others. I shielded Wang Li at every turn, indulging her disruption of the church’s work. I was like a shield for Satan, allowing it to run rampant in the church. I was a hypocritical, deceitful person! Those satanic philosophies are just fallacies that mislead and hurt people! Modern society is so dark and evil, because people live by them. They become cowardly and despicable, and hate the light. No one dares stand up, uphold justice and expose the truth. But those who are ingratiating prosper and gain power. There’s no justice or righteousness in this. Everyone is deceiving each other without any sincerity. That’s what becomes of humans corrupted by Satan. I finally saw clearly that these satanic philosophies appear to be in line with human notions, but are actually devilish words Satan uses to mislead and corrupt people. Living by them just makes us more and more selfish, evil, and deceitful. It’s a vile, filthy way to live, with no trace of humanity.

Later, I read a passage of God's words: **"If you hold nothing back, if you do not put on a front, a pretense, or cover things up, if you lay yourself bare to the brothers and sisters, do not hide your innermost ideas and thoughts, but instead allow others to see your honest attitude, then the truth will gradually take root in you, it will blossom and bear fruit, it will yield results, little-by-little. If your heart is increasingly honest, and increasingly oriented toward God, and if you know to protect the interests of God's house when you perform your duty, and your conscience is troubled when you fail to protect these interests, then this is proof that the truth has had an effect in you, and has become your life. Once the truth has become life in you, when you observe someone who is blasphemous toward God, unfearful of God, and perfunctory while performing their duty, or who disrupts and disturbs church work, you will respond according to the truth principles, and will be able to identify and expose them as necessary. ... If you are someone who truly believes in God, then even if you have yet to gain the truth and life, at the very least you will speak and act from the side of God; at the very least, you will not stand idly by when you see the interests of the house of God being compromised. When you have the urge to turn a blind eye, you will feel guilty, and ill at ease, and will say to yourself, 'I can't sit here and do nothing, I must stand up and say something, I must take responsibility, I must expose this evil behavior, I must stop it, so that the interests of the house of God are not harmed, and the church life is not disturbed.' If the truth has become your life, then not only will you have this courage and resolve, and will you be capable of understanding the matter completely, but you will also fulfill the responsibility you should bear for God's work and for the interests of His house, and your duty will thereby be fulfilled"** (The



Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Part Three). Reading this left me feeling both guilty and motivated. After all those years of faith, enjoying the truth God supplies, I still couldn't uphold principles or protect the church's work. I truly had no conscience! I had to take off my people-pleasing mask. I couldn't keep living by my evil, deceitful corrupt disposition. I had to stand up to practice the truth and protect the church's work. After that, I went to talk to Wang Li and dismissed her. I also opened up to her in fellowship, exposing one by one her behaviors of refusing to accept the truth, oppressing people, and disrupting the church's work. I stopped saying nice things that wouldn't hurt her to deceive her. I truly wanted to help her and expose her problems, so that she could understand her corrupt disposition and genuinely repent. She was so upset that she cried when I was done, and said she was ready to accept the church's arrangements, to go back and truly reflect and learn a lesson. The brothers' and sisters' states gradually recovered after that, and the work slowly started getting results. I genuinely felt the peace and ease that comes from practicing the truth. It's the only way to live in the light.

There were some work transfers later, so I started watering newcomers with a few other sisters. I saw Sister Chen Si didn't have much of a burden in her duty, and was negligent and irresponsible, which impacted the watering work. I was worried about it and wanted to point out her problem so she could change as soon as possible. But we'd just gotten to know each other and we were getting along so well, so I wondered if I were direct about her irresponsibility in her duty, would she get annoyed with me? Then I realized I was thinking like a people pleaser, so I quickly said a prayer. Then I read the word of God: **“And Jehovah God commanded the man, saying, Of every tree of the garden you may freely eat: But of the tree of the knowledge of good and evil, you shall not eat of it: for in the day**

**that you eat thereof you shall surely die.’ ... In these brief words that God spoke, can you see anything of God’s disposition? Are these words of God true? Is there any deception? Is there any falsity? Is there any intimidation? (No.) God honestly, truthfully and sincerely told man what he may eat and what he may not eat. God spoke clearly and plainly. Is there any hidden meaning in these words? Are these words not straightforward? Is there any need for conjecture? There is no need for guesswork. Their meaning is obvious at a glance. Upon reading them, one feels entirely clear about their meaning. That is, what God wants to say and what He wants to express comes from His heart. The things God expresses are clean, straightforward and clear. There are no covert motives, nor any hidden meanings. He speaks to man directly, telling him what he may eat and what he may not eat. That is to say, through these words of God, man can see that God’s heart is transparent and true. There is no trace of falsehood here; it is not a case of telling you that you may not eat what is edible, or telling you ‘Do it and see what happens’ with things that you cannot eat. This is not what God means. Whatever God thinks in His heart, that is what He says”** (The Word, Vol. 2. On Knowing God. God Himself, the Unique IV). I saw that what God said to Adam and Eve was perfectly clear and straightforward. He is sincere to humans and does not hide anything. God’s essence is so holy. In the last days, God expresses the truth to judge and chastise man. His words directly expose and dissect man’s nature essence, and reveal our inner ugliness and unrighteousness. His words are very clear and hide nothing. They may be harsh, but they are our salvation. Their purpose is to cleanse and transform us, so we can know ourselves, rebel against Satan, and live out a true human likeness. Satan is exactly the opposite: It is sinister and evil, and talks in a roundabout way, never directly saying what

it wants. It started out by saying nice, false things that sounded plausible to entice and mislead Adam and Eve, so they would sin and betray God. I'd been living by satanic philosophies, revealing an evil and deceitful disposition just like Satan. To protect my relationships with others and safeguard my image in others' eyes, I thought one thing and said another. I was as crooked as a snake, and so ambiguous and vague that others could not understand the exact meaning of my words. It was so slippery and deceitful of me. I was living out the image of Satan, not like a human. I was disgusted with myself when I realized this and I didn't want to be a people pleaser and a deceitful person anymore. I wanted to practice the truth and be an honest person who protects the work of the church. In the next day's gathering, I opened up about the problems I saw in Chen Si, and she was able to recognize her own problems after we fellowshiped together. I saw her state slowly begin to turn around after that, and I felt much freer.

These experiences have shown me that we shouldn't live by satanic philosophies and trick each other. We should be simple, open and sincere in how we treat one another. Only this is genuine love and it benefits everyone. I also saw that in order to have humanity and to feel peace and joy, we must practice being honest according to God's requirements. That is the only way to live out a human likeness. Thanks be to God!

## 56. A Fork in the Road

By Li Yang, China

I was born in a farming village and grew up in a poor family. My parents were simple-minded farmers who were often bullied. As a child, I swore that when I grew up I'd make something of myself and get the other villagers to see us in a new light, to stop looking down on us and bullying us. I started learning martial arts when I was 11 years old, and though it was tiring and I often got hurt, I never gave up regardless of how difficult it got. Later on, wanting to start a business and stand out from the crowd, I went around borrowing money, giving gifts, and cultivating relationships. In 1999, I was finally able to register a martial arts school.

After the school opened, it thrived under my diligent management with profits climbing higher and higher. It won the locals' approval and my parents were proud of me, feeling like I'd brought honor to the family. The students and their parents fawned over me, and the City Sports Bureau and town mayor valued me highly and were all smiles with me. Seeing everyone's admiration made me feel important and well-regarded, and my desire for status was fully satisfied. I was so happy, I'd felt like I finally made it in life. I participated in a lot of social events to help the school gain a firm footing, giving bribes to various departments and sending gifts to leaders during holidays so they'd award me certificates of merit and promote the school. To curry favor with them, I said and did countless things that went against my own convictions, afraid that if I slipped up with an official the business, status, and reputation I worked so hard to cultivate would disappear in an instant. I was constantly on tenterhooks and couldn't relax. It was exhausting both physically and mentally—a difficult, tiring

way to live. At the time, I was confused: My business was successful and I'd achieved both name and gain, so why was life so difficult and tiring?

Then, in May 2012, I accepted Almighty God's gospel of the last days. Gathering and interacting with the brothers and sisters of The Church of Almighty God, I saw it was a place free of deception, without deals of power and money. Everyone was simply focused on pursuing the truth. When they revealed a corrupt disposition, they could open up to fellowship on their self-knowledge, and seek the truth to resolve their issues. That was something I didn't see out in society. I felt like the path of faith was the right path to walk in life. Reading God's words, I learned that in the last days, God does the work of rewarding good and punishing evil. Only those who genuinely believe in God and pursue the truth will have God's care and protection, and will ultimately be saved and kept through the great disasters. For those who don't have faith or pursue the truth, no matter how well they run a business or how much money they make, it will all come to nothing in the end, and it won't be able to save their own lives. Once I understood all that, I wasn't as focused on the school's development anymore. Instead, when I had extra time I went out and shared the gospel.

My family supported my belief at first. Later on, however, my oldest son saw on the news that the government was oppressing and arresting believers. Afraid that my belief would threaten the school, my son started to oppose my faith, even threatening to report me to the police. A government official I had a good relationship with also advised me, "Faith isn't allowed in this country. You should give yours up. If you're arrested, not only will you be sentenced, but your school will probably be shut down. Wouldn't that destroy your family?" I told him that my faith was the true way and I was determined to keep it until the end. When he couldn't convince me, he told my wife some of the Communist Party's lies slandering The Church of

Almighty God. He also said believers in “Eastern Lightning” are primary government targets for arrest, and that later generations of their families would be negatively impacted, their children not being allowed to attend college, join the military or become government officials. When my wife heard this she began to fear my faith would negatively affect our children. She started a huge argument with me, even threatening me with a divorce. It was all so painful for me: “My second son found such a great job after he graduated with his master’s degree. If he were to lose all that because of my faith, he’d certainly go head-to-head with me. Also, the school I’ve worked so hard to establish is thriving now. If it were shut down because of my faith in God, then wouldn’t all those years of toil have been for nothing? What would the neighbors think of me?” At the time, I didn’t have any appetite and I couldn’t sleep. I was in such anguish that I even had thoughts of giving up my faith, but at the same time I knew that faith was the only path to salvation, so I couldn’t not believe.

I opened up about my state at a gathering. The leader fellowshiped on many of God’s words with me, including this passage: **“From the moment you come crying into this world, you begin to fulfill your duty. For God’s plan and for His ordination, you perform your role and start your life’s journey. Whatever your background, and whatever the journey ahead of you, no one can escape the orchestrations and arrangements of Heaven, and no one is in control of their own destiny, for only He who rules over all things is capable of such work”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. God Is the Source of Man’s Life). She fellowshiped: “Our fates are all in God’s hands. From the moment each of us is born, everything we are going to experience in this life, what setbacks and difficulties we’ll face, have all been predetermined by God. That we are able to have faith and accept God’s salvation now has also been

predetermined by Him. The fact that we are in China and undergo such oppression and hardship for our faith has God's permission, and He uses this oppression to perfect the faith and devotion of God's chosen people. Whether you'll be arrested, whether your school will be closed, what your children's prospects will be—this is all entirely in God's hands. No human can determine that, and the government doesn't have final say, either.” God's words and the leader's fellowship were enlightening for me: “It's true. I've already lived half of my life and have experienced so many things, and I realize nothing that happened was ever truly under my control. When I was in the military, for example, I trained hard and performed well. I was supposed to rise to the rank of officer, but then someone else took my place unfairly. On the other hand, I experienced all sorts of difficulties when setting up my school, but in the end I got it up and running smoothly, and now it's going well. These successes and failures were outside of human control.” Thinking about all of this, I realized that everything we experience in life is determined by God's rule, and we don't have a say. Worrying about whether I'd be arrested or not was of no use. God decided that long ago, so I needed to leave it all in God's hands and submit to His arrangements. The leader then fellowshiped with me about something else: “The true way has been oppressed since ancient times. The more it is the true way, the more Satan's forces brutally persecute it. How could Satan resign itself to God saving people? When the Lord Jesus came to work, He was madly resisted and persecuted by the Roman government and the religious world, as were His followers. Today, we believe in the true God, so it is inevitable that we are to be arrested and persecuted by the satanic Communist Party regime. God uses this persecution to help us gain discernment, so we can clearly see the Party's demonic, anti-God essence.”

Later, I read this passage of God's words: **"For thousands of years this has been the land of filth. It is unbearably dirty, misery abounds, ghosts run rampant everywhere, tricking and deceiving, making groundless accusations, being ruthless and vicious, trampling this ghost town and leaving it littered with dead bodies; the stench of decay covers the land and pervades the air, and it is heavily guarded. Who can see the world beyond the skies? The devil tightly trusses all of man's body, it veils both his eyes, and seals his lips firmly shut. The king of devils has rampaged for several thousand years, right up until today, when it still keeps a close watch on the ghost town, as if it were an impenetrable palace of demons; this pack of watchdogs, meanwhile, stare with glaring eyes, deeply fearful that God will catch them unawares and wipe them all out, leaving them without a place of peace and happiness. How could the people of a ghost town such as this ever have seen God? Have they ever enjoyed the dearness and loveliness of God? What appreciation have they of the matters of the human world? Who of them can understand God's eager intentions? Small wonder, then, that God incarnate remains completely hidden: In a dark society such as this, where the demons are merciless and inhumane, how could the king of devils, who kills people without batting an eye, tolerate the existence of a God who is lovely, kind, and also holy? How could it applaud and cheer the arrival of God? These lackeys! They repay kindness with hate, they began treating God as an enemy long ago, they abuse God, they are savage in the extreme, they have not the slightest regard for God, they plunder and pillage, they have lost all conscience, they go against all conscience, and they tempt the innocent into senselessness. Forefathers of the ancient? Beloved leaders? They all oppose God! Their meddling has left all beneath heaven in a state of darkness and**



**chaos! Religious freedom? The legitimate rights and interests of citizens? They are all tricks for covering up sin!”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Work and Entry (8)). God’s words showed me that the Communist Party is an atheistic party, an enemy of God that won’t allow for God’s existence. It claims to permit religious freedom, but that’s just a misleading lie. It’s afraid that if people gain faith, read God’s words, and learn the truth, they’ll realize the party is Satan itself that hurts people, rebel against and reject it. Then, its ambition and goal to forever control people will be dashed. So, to keep people from believing in and following God, it madly arrests and persecutes God’s chosen people and uses the media to malign and slander The Church of Almighty God. It even threatens believers’ families, getting them to oppress and defy believers until they give up their faith, lose God’s salvation, and are destroyed in hell along with the party. The Communist Party is incredibly vile and wicked! My family had been misled by it and started oppressing me. If I gave in to my family’s oppression, I’d just be falling for Satan’s tricks. I couldn’t be taken in by it. No matter how my family stood in my way, I knew I had to keep my faith and continue doing my duty.

Seeing how determined I was to follow God, my oldest son ramped up his persecution. One day, he even ran me out of the school right in front of my students. He yelled at me in anger, “The government doesn’t allow religion, but you insist on believing! If you’re arrested, the whole family will be implicated, even my children. How is that acceptable? If you want to keep your faith you need to leave the school, and don’t drag us into it!” I just couldn’t believe my ears, that my very own son could say something so heartless to me, chasing me out just for believing in God. I was really hurt: “If I were kicked out of my own school, wouldn’t that mean my whole life’s blood, sweat, and tears have been for nothing? Who would call me

‘Headmaster,’ and who would look up to me? I wouldn’t get to enjoy those things anymore. I’d just become an average farmer again. How could I face my friends and acquaintances?” These thoughts were unbearably painful for me. “Where would I go if my son kicked me out? Should I just listen to him?” As this all occurred to me, I thought of God’s words: **“If people do not have any confidence, it is not easy for them to continue down this path. Everyone can now see that God’s work does not conform in the slightest with people’s notions and imaginings. God has done so much work and spoken so many words, and though people may acknowledge that they are the truth, notions about God are still liable to arise in them. If people wish to understand the truth and gain it, they must have the confidence and willpower to be able to stand by what they have already seen and what they have gained from their experiences. No matter what God does in people, they must uphold what they themselves possess, be sincere in front of God, and remain devoted to Him to the very end. This is mankind’s duty. People must uphold that which they should do”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. You Should Maintain Your Devotion to God). **“Do not be discouraged, do not be weak, and I will make things clear for you. The road to the kingdom is not so smooth; nothing is that simple! You want blessings to come to you easily, do you not? Today, everyone will have bitter trials to face. Without such trials, the loving heart you have for Me will not grow stronger and you will not have true love for Me. Even if these trials consist merely of minor circumstances, everyone must pass through them; it’s just that the difficulty of the trials will vary from one person to another”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Utterances of Christ in the Beginning, Chapter 41). God’s words helped calm me down. It’s true, the path of belief in God isn’t all smooth sailing. We have to endure some hardships,

and without faith it's hard to stay on the path. If I became negative and retreated because of this oppression, where was my faith? Before I believed in God, when I was out in the world struggling all those years to get ahead, it was a difficult, tiring, and hopeless way to live. Now, I was lucky enough to encounter this once-in-a-lifetime opportunity—God coming to save mankind. How could I just casually give it up? How could I be saved by God if I did? The Lord Jesus said: **“Behold the fowls of the air: for they sow not, neither do they reap, nor gather into barns; yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not much better than they?”** (Matthew 6:26). God creates the birds, who don't sow or reap, but He still allows them to survive. Now that I believed in God and did my duty, God would open up a path for me. If my son kicked me out of the house, I believed God would lead me, and I had nothing to worry about. This thought renewed my faith and I no longer felt constrained by him. Seeing that I was remaining steadfast in my faith, he angrily pushed me toward the school's entrance. I had no choice but to leave the school behind and go stay at my parents' house for a while.

That evening, thinking about my plight, I felt miserable. I prayed to God: “God, I don't know what Your intention is in this. I know that by believing in You I am walking the right path, so why is my son treating me this way? Please guide me to understand Your intention.” Then, I thought of a passage of God's words some brothers and sisters had shared with me: **“In every step of work that God does within people, externally it appears to be interactions between people, as if born of human arrangements or from human disturbance. But behind the scenes, every step of work, and everything that happens, is a wager made by Satan before God, and requires people to stand firm in their testimony to God. Take when Job was tried, for example: Behind the scenes, Satan was making a bet**

**with God, and what happened to Job was the deeds of men and the disturbance of men. Behind every step of work that God does in you is Satan's wager with God—behind it all is a battle”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Only Loving God Is Truly Believing in God). By pondering God's words I could see that on the surface this issue appeared to be my son being misled by the Communist Party's lies, oppressing and hindering my faith, and kicking me out of my own school. In reality, however, it was Satan disturbing, misleading, and manipulating the situation just to see what I would choose—would I maintain my family relationships, protect my name and status, and betray God? Or would I let go of these personal interests and continue following God? My situation worried and upset me, as I lacked true faith in God, and didn't have the resolve to give everything up for Him. Satan was targeting my weak points—my desire for reputation and status, and my concern for my family—to get me to betray God, to leave Him behind. Then, ultimately, it would ruin me and swallow me up. Satan is so sinister and evil! Understanding this made me feel a little better. I resolved that no matter what my family did to stop me and what hardships I faced later on in life, I'd stay strong in my faith and follow God until the end, humiliating Satan.

Since I couldn't stay at my parents' house long, I had to go back to the school. After I went back, I continued attending gatherings and sharing the gospel. My oldest son and his wife stepped up their oppression when they saw I didn't give up on my faith. They often said awful things to me, cursing at me and telling me to go away. They also took control of my school's finances, leaving me without a single cent. They frequently said hurtful things just to upset me, and for a while, I was constantly angry and struggled to eat, so my health took a turn for the worse. My vision would go black when I walked, and I nearly fainted several times. I developed

gastritis, and I was in so much pain in the evenings that the only way to get some relief was to shove a pillow against my stomach. When I couldn't sleep at night I'd go out to the school grounds and look at the training building, offices, cafeteria and dorms. Gazing at the school I'd worked so hard to build really weighed on me. I wondered how many roads I'd traveled, how many connections I'd made, and how much I'd suffered just to open this school. Now that I'd gained some success, it was being taken away by my very own son. It was my life's work. Now, if I were to keep my faith, I would risk losing it all. Thinking about it this way was like a knife through the heart for me. I was so weak during that time, always crying in secret at night. In tears, I prayed to God, "Oh God, I'm going to lose this business I've spent my life building, and I just can't bear to let it go. Please guide me to overcome this situation."

My brothers and sisters shared some of God's words with me later that gave me a path to practice. God's words say: **"Now you should be able to clearly see the precise path that Peter took. If you can clearly see Peter's path, then you will be certain about the work being done today, so you will not complain or be negative, or long for anything. You should experience Peter's mood at the time: He was stricken with sorrow; he no longer asked for a future or any blessings. He did not seek profit, happiness, fame, or fortune in the world; he only sought to live the most meaningful life, which was to repay God's love and dedicate what he held utterly most precious to God. Then he would be satisfied in his heart"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. How Peter Came to Know Jesus). Thinking over God's words opened my eyes. Back then, Peter suffered his family's oppression for his faith, too. His family wanted him to make a name for himself and bring glory to the household, but he wasn't constrained by them. When the Lord Jesus called upon him, he gave

up everything to follow the Lord and pursue a life of meaning. Peter's experience was enlightening for me. Peter had genuine faith in God and was able to give up everything to follow Him. He pursued the truth, and came to know and love God, ultimately gaining God's approval. I'd been a believer for a short time and had a shallow understanding of the truth, but thinking about the misery my past pursuit of name and status had brought me, and then looking at the path taken by Peter that gained God's approval was truly inspiring for me. I wanted to follow Peter's example, let go of name and reputation, and pursue the truth. Later on I decided to leave the school and keep practicing my faith and doing my duty.

A few days later, some of my old military friends got really angry when they learned about my son kicking me out of the school, and were coming up with ideas left and right for me to get it back. Friends and relatives were all decrying the injustice, and the village secretary helped me by providing official certification that I'd built up the school on my own, and no one else had a stake in it. Hearing all that they said, I thought: "Now, with this certification, if my military friends help me get the school back, I'll regain all the prestige I lost." I realized I had the urge to pursue name and status again, so I silently prayed to God, asking Him to give me the strength to rebel against the flesh. I thought of Job's experience after my prayer. All of his possessions were taken away from him overnight, and though it was incredibly painful, he didn't rely on his own devices to go wrest them back. Instead, he prayed and submitted to God's arrangements. My property was nowhere near the equivalent of Job's riches, but if I didn't pray and seek with God in the face of this situation, instead wanting to get it back on my own, how was that submitting to God at all? Plus, if I did recover the school and had to spend all day running it, I wouldn't have the energy to practice my faith and do my duty. Now that my son had taken the

school from me, I could practice my faith and do my duty wholeheartedly. That was a wonderful thing. This thought brightened my heart quite a bit. I realized that I was never able to let go of the school because I was too deeply corrupted and cared too much about reputation and status.

I read this passage of God's words later on: **"Born into such a filthy land, man has been severely blighted by society, he has been influenced by feudal ethics, and he has been taught at 'institutes of higher learning.' The backward thinking, corrupt morality, mean view on life, despicable philosophy for worldly dealings, utterly worthless existence, and depraved lifestyle and customs—all of these things have severely intruded upon man's heart, and severely undermined and attacked his conscience. As a result, man is ever more distant from God, and ever more opposed to Him. Man's disposition becomes more vicious by the day, and there is not a single person who will willingly give up anything for God, not a single person who will willingly submit to God, nor, moreover, a single person who will willingly seek the appearance of God. Instead, under the power of Satan, man does nothing but pursue pleasure, giving himself over to the corruption of the flesh in the land of mud. Even when they hear the truth, those who live in darkness give no thought to putting it into practice, nor are they inclined to seek out God even if they have beheld His appearance. How could a mankind so depraved have any chance of salvation? How could a mankind so decadent live in the light?"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. To

Have an Unchanged Disposition Is to Be in Enmity to God). God's words revealed my precise state. Ever since I was little, my parents and teachers taught me things like "Man struggles upward; water flows downward," "One must endure the greatest hardships in order to become the greatest of men," "Stand out above the rest," and "Bring honor to your ancestors." These

satanic philosophies had become deeply entrenched within my heart, establishing within me a warped perspective on life and its values. I thought that getting ahead, being better than others, and gaining reputation and status was the only way to live a life of integrity and value. I was ready to endure any hardship so I could make a name for myself. When I was managing the martial arts school, every day was particularly tiring. I used the money I'd earned by the sweat of my brow to curry favor with government officials, boot-licking and sweet-talking them, living without any dignity. I'd have to send government leaders holiday gifts in advance, afraid of getting in trouble for even the slightest oversight. Maintaining those complex interpersonal relationships was exhausting both mentally and physically, but I was deeply mired in it and couldn't extricate myself. The people around me recklessly committed all sorts of misdeeds after gaining name and status, engaging in corruption and bribery, seeing prostitutes, and gambling—they had no limits. That's entirely how Satan corrupts and harms people. My son seizing the school I'd built with my own two hands was also due to him being overcome by the allure of gain and status. He disregarded the love between father and son for that gain. It reminded me of the ancient imperial families where brothers, fathers and sons would murder each other to seize the throne. That was Satan's fallacies and devilish words corrupting people to the point of losing all humanity and reason. At that point I saw how reputation and status are shackles with which Satan binds humanity. If we live by Satan's philosophies, seeking reputation and status, we'll just become more and more corrupt and life will become increasingly painful. God did not want to see me corrupted by Satan any longer, and so when I was deep in the mire of reputation and status, God's words showed me that pursuing the truth is the right path, the only way to live a meaningful life. I was bound and constrained by satanic philosophies, so



when I lost the pleasures of money, reputation, and status, I found them hard to let go of, and I was miserable. I even wanted to open a lawsuit to get those things back. I was so foolish. If I'd gone on that way, I'd just continue letting Satan harm me, and ultimately I'd be destroyed together with it. The Lord Jesus said: **“For what is a man profited, if he shall gain the whole world, and lose his own soul? Or what shall a man give in exchange for his soul?”** (Matthew 16:26). It's true. No matter how much money or reputation someone has, it can't buy the truth or life! Today, I've lost the possessions, reputation and status I've built up over most of my life, but through this experience I've learned how those things harm people, and how the frightening consequences of pursuing them can be. I've also learned the meaning and value of pursuing the truth, and have become able to let go of material possessions to follow God and do my duty. This is God's great salvation for me. The moment I understood God's intention, I didn't want to fight with my son or sue him anymore. I only cared about submitting to God's sovereignty and arrangements, properly pursuing the truth and doing my duty.

Since then, I've been sharing the gospel in the church and doing my duty. Although I don't have others' admiration anymore, I feel more at peace than I ever have, and every day is fulfilling. I am certain in my heart that having faith and following God is the best choice and the most meaningful way to live. Thank God!

## **57. I Finally Dared to Report Wrongdoing**

By Liu Yi, China

While serving as a leader, I expelled a sister from the church who did not deserve to be expelled, meting out an unjust conviction due to my lack of responsibility and principles in my duty. Later on, the sister was allowed back into the church and I was deemed to be a false leader and dismissed from my position for not doing real work. The church instructed me to take some time to reflect and I was quite willing to come to understand myself through self-reflection and to truly repent. At that time, I was living with Sister Qin Ken. A church leader named Li Jing would often come by to ask Qin Ken about various aspects of her duty. She would also tell Qin Ken about shortcomings she'd noticed in other brothers and sisters and how she had pruned them. At first, I didn't think much of this, but as time went on and she continued to regularly speak in this way, I began to think: "Aren't you judging and disparaging people behind their backs to show off? Can you really get results by just chiding the brothers and sisters when they have problems instead of fellowshipping the truth to resolve their issues?" I thought about bringing this up with Li Jing, but then it occurred to me: "I'm supposed to be in a period of reflection following my dismissal—what if she doesn't accept my feedback and says I'm not behaving as I should during this time of reflection? If the upper leadership looks into my state and Li Jing says I haven't changed, who knows how long it will be until I get assigned to a new duty? Forget it, I'd better not mention anything." But after that, I still felt uneasy. It was uncaring to just ignore this problem I'd seen in Li Jing. Later on, when I heard Li Jing judging and disparaging brothers and sisters and showing off again, I pointed it out to her. Outwardly, she seemed to accept my criticism, but she continued to act in

the same way. I pointed the issue out to her several times, but she just wouldn't change her ways. I thought to myself: "She seems to recognize her problem, but she never changes her behavior. She's not accepting the truth. Perhaps I can seek her out and then dissect and fellowship on her inability to accept the truth with her. That would be helpful for her." But then I thought: "I've already brought this up with her several times. What if when I bring it up again, she not only fails to accept it, but goes on to condemn me? I'm supposed to be in a time of reflection now—will I still have a chance to be saved if I'm expelled? Forget it, I'd better just behave myself and keep quiet."

Later on, I began hosting two sisters, Qin Ken and Xia Yu. One morning, I overheard Li Jing reprimanding them for being too slow in carrying out the work of cleansing the church, saying that her leader would think poorly of her because of it. The two sisters responded, saying: "Expelling a church member is a big deal. We have to verify and understand all aspects of the situation before moving forward. If we're too hasty, we'll be likely to wrongfully condemn people." But Li Jing wouldn't accept this and said she planned to condemn Sister Chang Jing as an evil person and have her expelled. Actually, Chang Jing just had an arrogant disposition—while serving as a gospel deacon, she couldn't fellowship the truth to resolve issues and was always chiding people and making them feel constrained. But she didn't have the essence of an evil person and didn't satisfy the conditions for expulsion. At the time, Qin Ken and Xia Yu disagreed with Li Jing and argued that Chang Jing's behavior didn't meet the standards for expulsion. They also noted that Chang Jing had gained some understanding of her past transgressions through self-reflection. However, not only did Li Jing ignore their arguments, she even chided them, saying that they would be shielding an evil person by failing to expel

Chang Jing and impeding the work of cleansing the church. Hearing this, I thought: “The work of cleansing the church is extremely important, and must be carried out according to principle. Li Jing is doing evil by arbitrarily condemning and expelling someone that doesn’t meet the specifications for expulsion just to safeguard her own reputation and status!” I considered pointing this out to Li Jing, but then I thought: “I’m only a host for my brothers and sisters and my words don’t count for much. Even if I do bring it up with her, she might not accept my criticism. I’d better just stay out of it.” At this thought, I ended up just keeping my mouth shut. That afternoon, I heard that Li Jing had gotten the two sisters to organize all the information on Chang Jing in preparation for her expulsion. The two sisters once again voiced their concerns that Chang Jing’s behavior didn’t meet the conditions for expulsion and asked Li Jing to do some more seeking. But Li Jing wouldn’t listen and once again condemned the sisters for impeding the cleansing work and protecting an evil person. After she said this, she stormed out of the room. I remembered my own history of not doing my duty according to principles, and how I’d wrongfully condemned a church member because I’d failed to verify the details of the case for her expulsion. When I went to apologize to the sister who’d been expelled, she told me that it had caused her great pain and suffering to not be able to gather or read God’s words. This had made me feel incredibly remorseful and guilty. The harm I’d caused to that sister and the damage I’d done to her life was irreparable, and the whole ordeal had left a permanent stain on my life as a believer. If this matter of expelling Chang Jing was weighed according to the principles, Chang Jing’s behavior would not be serious enough to merit expulsion. And yet Li Jing was determined to expel her to safeguard her own reputation and status. This was evil doing! That night, I tossed and turned in my bed, unable to sleep—I kept thinking of how when

the two sisters fellowshiped with Li Jing, she was unaccepting and had even arbitrarily condemned them. Wasn't she using her status to suppress and constrain them? I thought that I ought to seek out Li Jing and fellowship with her to safeguard the church's work. But then I thought about how Li Jing hadn't accepted my suggestions before. What would I do if she accused me of impeding and disrupting the cleansing work when I brought it up again? I had already been dismissed due to my transgression and was still in a period of reflection. What would I do if I were expelled from the church based on those allegations? When this occurred to me, I began to waver.

After that, I came before God to seek and pray and read the following passage of His word: **“All of you say you are considerate of God's burden and will defend the testimony of the church, but who among you has really been considerate of God's burden? Ask yourself: Are you someone who has shown consideration for His burden? Can you practice righteousness for Him? Can you stand up and speak for Me? Can you steadfastly put the truth into practice? Are you bold enough to fight against all of Satan's deeds? Would you be able to set your feelings aside and expose Satan for the sake of My truth? Can you allow My intentions to be satisfied in you? Have you offered up your heart in the most crucial of moments? Are you someone who follows My will?”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Utterances of Christ in the Beginning, Chapter 13). The judgment of God's word filled me with shame and I wanted to hide my face. After being dismissed, I kept saying that I wanted to reflect on myself and repent, but nothing about my behavior showed repentance. I was well aware that Li Jing was going against the principles in the cleansing work to maintain her status and reputation, and that she would damage the brothers' and sisters' life entry and the church's work. But I

worried that if I fellowshiped with her she wouldn't accept it, and that she'd accuse me of impeding and disrupting the church's cleansing work and expel me. In order to protect myself, I hadn't dared say anything when I'd clearly noticed a problem. I completely lacked a sense of justice. I realized that if Li Jing really expelled Chang Jing, not only would she be hurting Chang Jing, she would also leave a stain of transgression on herself. I knew I had to stop being a people-pleaser. Now that I'd seen Li Jing was on the same path toward failure that I'd once walked, I had to point out her issue and make her aware of how serious the consequences of her actions would be. After that, I met up with Li Jing and fellowshiped with her on my own experience of wrongly accusing someone due to not carrying out expulsion based on the principles. But Li Jing wouldn't accept what I said and even told me that I should just stick to hosting brothers and sisters and not get involved in the cleansing work as I was still in a reflection period after being dismissed. I was a bit dismayed when she said this and I thought: "Am I overstepping my bounds? If I bring it up with her again, will she dislike me even more? If I really do offend her, will she try to make life difficult for me? But the essence of Li Jing's behavior is really serious, and it will be very dangerous for her to keep going on like this!" Realizing this, I prayed to God, asking Him to guide me through this matter.

Two days later, Li Jing came to our residence, took me aside and asked me what I thought about her plan to dismiss Qin Ken for letting her feelings dictate how she did her duty and impeding the cleansing work. I said: "Qin Ken bears a great burden in her duty and has dealt with Chang Jing's case according to principle. I don't see how she's impeded the cleansing work." But Li Jing insisted that Chang Jing was an evil person and should be expelled. She also claimed that the reason why there had been no progress in the cleansing work was because Qin Ken was protecting Chang Jing. I

was quite shocked when I heard her say this—Qin Ken had been acting according to principles by objecting to Chang Jing’s expulsion. How could Li Jing dismiss her so arbitrarily? I hurriedly replied: “We can’t arbitrarily expel or dismiss people, and not take the lives of our brothers and sisters seriously just because we want to protect our own reputation and status! I have a transgression on my record now because I didn’t do my duty according to principles—please don’t go down the same path toward failure that I did! We must do our duties in strict accordance with the principles.” Li Jing angrily replied: “Well, I’ve already made the decision to dismiss Qin Ken, nothing you can say will change my mind.” Hearing this, I felt angry and helpless. I thought: “I can’t afford to offend you, so I’ll just have to pipe down. Anyway, I gave you my opinion and it’s up to you whether or not you accept it.” After that, I just kept my mouth shut. Ultimately, Li Jing still dismissed Qin Ken and reassigned me to a remote location to do my duty. She claimed that the move was for my own safety—she said that the CCP had been stepping up their campaign of suppression and arrests and given that I had previously been a leader and knew a lot about the church, it would be best if I didn’t make direct contact with brothers and sisters. She also told me that going forward, any letters I sent or that were sent to me would have to go through her. Before I could even reply, she cut me off saying, “I have other business to attend to now,” and sped off on her bike. I stood at the doorway of my house, watching her ride away as tears came streaming down my face. I thought: “So now you’re restricting me and trying to control me?” The more I thought about it, the more stifled I felt. I thought back on Li Jing’s behavior during that period: When I gave her a suggestion, she didn’t accept it and even threatened me, saying that I should just stick to hosting brothers and sisters and not overstep my bounds. Then, worrying that her evil deeds would be revealed, she sent me off to a remote

location and didn't let me contact the other brothers and sisters, with the excuse that she was just trying to protect me. She was being so sinister and deceitful! To maintain her own status and reputation, she suppressed and condemned anyone who wouldn't fall in line with her orders, following Satan's rule of "Let those who comply with me thrive and those who resist me perish." Was she not acting like an antichrist? I knew I couldn't keep compromising, and that I had to report Li Jing and expose her evil deeds. The problem was that anything I wrote would have to pass through her. If she found out I had written a letter reporting her, there was a possibility she would suppress me even further. If she made up an accusation against me and expelled me from the church, what chance would I have of being saved then? When this occurred to me, I shrank back again and felt incredibly tormented.

For the next few days, previous interactions I'd had with Li Jing kept running through my head and I was in no mood to do my duty. One night, I finally decided to write a letter to report Li Jing, but as I wrote, I began to think: "If I report her, will the other brothers and sisters think that I'm not behaving as I should during my period of reflection? When Qin Ken was dismissed, I don't recall hearing that she reported Li Jing. Will it seem like I'm trying to show off if I report her? First, I gave Li Jing some suggestions and now I'm reporting her. If she knows about it, will she think I just can't let go of this problem I see in her?" I deleted the letter after realizing all this, but I felt quite guilty about doing so. Given how Li Jing was suppressing me, if I didn't report her, who knew who else she would suppress in the future. I barely slept at all that night. I came before God in prayer, saying: "Oh God, I want to report Li Jing, but I'm afraid that she'll suppress me even further when she finds out. Oh God, I don't know how I should get through this situation, please guide me."



Later on, I came across this passage of God's words: **"You must enter from the side of positivity; be active and not passive. You must be unshaken by anyone or anything, in all situations, and you must not be influenced by anyone's words. You must have a stable disposition; no matter what people say, you must immediately put into practice what you know to be the truth. You must always have My words at work inside of you, regardless of whom you might be facing; you must be able to stand firm in your testimony to Me and show consideration for My burdens. You must not blindly agree with others without having your own ideas; rather, you must have the courage to stand up and object to those things that do not conform with the truth. If you know clearly that something is wrong, yet lack the courage to expose it, then you are not a person who practices the truth. You want to say something, but dare not come right out with it, so you beat around the bush and then change the topic; Satan is inside you holding you back, causing you to speak without any effect and to be unable to persevere until the end. You still carry fear in your heart, and is this not because your heart is still filled with Satan's ideas?"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Utterances of Christ in the Beginning, Chapter 12). Through God's words, I learned that God loves those that protect the church's work. When they see something that violates the principles and hurts the interests of the church, they are able to practice the truth to protect the church's work. By contrast, God is disgusted by those that blindly agree with others and only selfishly and despicably act to protect their own interests. They remain indifferent when they witness the church's work being damaged. As I reflected on my behavior during that time, I realized that even though I knew it was improper for Li Jing to judge others arbitrarily behind their backs and show off, I worried that if I continued to speak out, I'd offend

her. So, to protect my own interests, I'd underplayed the issue when I brought it up with her. To maintain her own reputation and status, Li Jing had insisted on labeling Chang Jing an evil person and expelling her, accused Qin Ken and Xia Yu of impeding the cleansing work and dismissed Qin Ken. I knew these behaviors violated the principles, that she was doing evil and resisting God. But I worried that if I directly exposed the essence of what she had done, she would make life difficult for me, and expel me on the basis of the claim that I was impeding and disrupting the church's cleansing work. So I just gave her some advice and encouraged her to change her behavior, allowing her to continue her campaign of brazen evil-doing. Worried that I would report her actions, Li Jing then isolated me and didn't let me interact with other brothers and sisters. I could clearly see that she was trying to cover up her evil deeds. I should have stepped up to expose and report her, but I was afraid of offending her and didn't even have the courage to write a report letter. I was living an ignoble life, and I was a coward that didn't dare practice the truth. I wasn't considering the church's work, or showing any care for the possible damage done to the brothers' and sisters' lives. I didn't have the slightest sense of justice and was truly selfish and despicable!

As I continued seeking, I came across these passages of God's words: **"Conscience and reason should both be components of a person's humanity. These are both the most fundamental and most important. What kind of person is one who lacks conscience and does not have the reason of normal humanity? Generally speaking, they are a person who lacks humanity, a person of extremely poor humanity. Going into more detail, what manifestations of lost humanity does this person exhibit? Have a go at analyzing what characteristics are found in such people and what specific manifestations they present. (They are selfish and**

base.) Selfish and base people are perfunctory in their actions and stand aloof from anything that does not concern them personally. They do not consider the interests of God's house, nor do they show consideration for God's intentions. They take on no burden of performing their duties or testifying for God, and they have no sense of responsibility. ... There are some people who do not take any responsibility regardless of the duty they are performing. They don't promptly report problems they discover to their superiors, either. When they see people being disruptive and disturbing, they turn a blind eye. When they see evil people committing evil, they don't try to stop them. They don't protect the interests of the house of God, or consider what their duty and responsibility is. When they perform their duty, people like this don't do any real work; they are people pleasers and are greedy for comfort; they speak and act only for their own vanity, face, status, and interests, and are only willing to devote their time and effort to things that benefit them" (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. In Giving One's Heart to God, One Can Obtain the Truth). "Until people have experienced God's work and understood the truth, it is Satan's nature that takes charge and dominates them from within. What, specifically, does that nature entail? For example, why are you selfish? Why do you protect your own position? Why do you have such strong feelings? Why do you enjoy those unrighteous things? Why do you like those evils? What is the basis for your fondness for such things? Where do these things come from? Why are you so happy to accept them? By now, you have all come to understand that the main reason behind all these things is that Satan's poison is within man. So what is Satan's poison? How can it be expressed? For example, if you ask, 'How should people live? What should people live for?' people will

**answer, ‘Every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost.’ This single phrase expresses the very root of the problem. Satan’s philosophy and logic have become people’s lives. No matter what people pursue, they do so for themselves—and so they live only for themselves. ‘Every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost’—this is the life philosophy of man, and it also represents human nature. These words have already become the nature of corrupt mankind and they are the true portrait of corrupt mankind’s satanic nature. This satanic nature has already become the basis for corrupt mankind’s existence. For several thousand years, corrupt mankind has lived by this venom of Satan, right up to the present day”** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. How to Walk the Path of Peter). Through the revelation of God’s words, I realized that I was living based upon satanic poisons like: “Every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost,” “Sensible people are good at self-protection, seeking only to avoid making mistakes,” “Local officials have more control than state officials,” and “Beggars can’t be choosers.” I had become incredibly selfish and deceitful and only ever considered my own interests. I didn’t dare say anything even when I observed a false leader doing evil and damaging the church’s interests. I had lost my conscience and reason as a created being, and I wasn’t living out the likeness of a true human at all. I thought back to Li Jing expelling Chang Jing. I’d known that Chang Jing’s behavior was not severe enough to warrant being expelled and that expulsion would cause her spiritual suffering and be extremely damaging to her life entry. Yet, to protect my own interests, I hadn’t prevented Li Jing from arbitrarily expelling her. I had been so selfish and lacking in humanity! When Li Jing dismissed Qin Ken, I worried that I’d be stripped of my duty if I offended Li Jing, so I didn’t dare uphold the principles and stop this evil deed. I

hadn't personally committed these transgressions, but I had looked on indifferently as Li Jing committed evil and allowed her to disrupt and destroy the church's work and suppress and punish my sisters. Wasn't I standing on Satan's side and helping the wicked carry out their wicked deeds? I hated myself when I realized this. God's disposition is righteous and unoffendable. He detests those who live an ignoble life, only look after themselves, and don't practice the truth. If I never stepped up to expose Li Jing's evil deeds and let her continue causing disruption and doing evil in the church, I'd be shielding her evil deeds and would be detested and despised by God. I came across another passage of God's words that said: **"In the church, stand firm in your testimony to Me, uphold the truth; right is right and wrong is wrong. Do not confuse black and white. You shall be at war with Satan and must completely vanquish it so that it never rises again. You must give everything you have to protect My testimony. This shall be the goal of your actions—do not forget this"**

(The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Utterances of Christ in the Beginning, Chapter 41). God's words gave me a path of practice. When I observed things that didn't accord with the principles, I should put aside my own interests and uphold the truth principles and protect the church's work. This is the responsibility I should carry out as a created being and a principle of conduct for all believers. I couldn't continue worrying about my prospects and fate, and living an ignoble life just to protect my own interests. I had to practice the truth and protect the church's work—I had to step up to expose and report Li Jing's evil deeds.

After that, I reflected on why I kept worrying that reporting Li Jing would affect my prospects and fate. I realized that I held some fallacious ideas. I thought that because I was still in a period of reflection after being dismissed, if I were to raise an issue with a leader, people would think I

wasn't behaving as I should during reflection. I thought that I was only a host, and that I lacked standing and status and my words carried little weight, so I didn't dare confront Li Jing when I saw her arbitrarily expelling and dismissing people. I thought that since Li Jing was a leader, if I offended her, she'd make life difficult for me and I'd be unable to do my duty. I also thought that if I were expelled, I'd completely lose any chance of being saved. I mistakenly believed that my fate was in Li Jing's hands and whether or not I'd be able to continue doing my duty and attain salvation was all up to her. I didn't believe that God's house is ruled by God and the truth. This kind of idea is blasphemous and a misunderstanding of God. My fate is in God's hands and no person has a say in it, much less could any leader decide it. In the past, imperious and despotic antichrists had done evil and caused disruptions in the church, some had taken control of the church and tried to establish their own independent kingdoms, but eventually they were all expelled. God's house is ruled by the truth and the Holy Spirit. No evil people or antichrist can gain a footing in the church and they all are eventually revealed and eliminated by God. Even if I were suppressed, punished, or even expelled for exposing and reporting a false leader, it would only be temporary and wouldn't mean that I'd never attain salvation. As a member of the church, no matter what duty I did, whether I'd committed transgressions, or whether I'd been dismissed in the past, if I observed a false leader or antichrist doing evil, disrupting the church's work or suppressing God's chosen people, I had to step up to report and expose such behavior. That was my responsibility and obligation.

While I was thinking over what I should write in my report, I ran into Xia Yu. With tears in her eyes, she told me that she'd made some suggestions to Li Jing after seeing her fail to follow the principles in the church's cleansing work. She said that Li Jing wouldn't accept her advice

and had dismissed her. Xia Yu's tearful story made it even clearer to me that when false leaders and antichrists exercise power in the church, it's not only harmful to the brothers and sisters, it also leads to the disruption and disturbance of the church's work. If I didn't expose and report Li Jing as soon as possible, it would only lead to even greater damage to the church's work. I decided to write a letter exposing Li Jing's evil deeds that very night and ask some brothers and sisters to pass it on to the upper-level leaders. To my surprise, I returned home to find a message from the upper-level leaders inviting me to meet with them. I knew that God had opened up a path for me. When we met, I presented all of Li Jing's evil deeds to them. They said they had received several messages recently reporting Li Jing and would deal with the matter according to the principles as soon as possible after looking into and verifying the charges. Hearing this, I felt happy that I'd finally been able to practice a bit of truth and that my heart was finally liberated from suppression.

A few days later, I received a message from the upper-level leaders saying that upon investigation, Li Jing had been found to be a false leader walking the path of an antichrist. The nature of this matter was quite serious, so they had begun by dismissing her. If she failed to repent, she would be dealt with as an antichrist. Hearing this, I truly felt that it is Christ and the truth that rule over God's house. No one person has the final say in the matters of the church and no evildoer can hold a place in God's house. I also realized that only by practicing the truth and protecting the church's work are we in accordance with God's intentions. Thanks be to God!

## 58. Escaping the Demons' Lair

By Xiao Kang, China

One day in May 2004, I was in a gathering with two sisters when over 20 police suddenly came charging in. They yelled at us saying, “None of you move, sit on the floor!” Then they took pictures of the three of us before proceeding to upend the entire house like a gang of bandits. One of the policemen found in my purse a receipt for 200,000 yuan in church funds. My heart leaped into my throat as I thought: “Now that they’ve found this receipt, they’ll certainly ask me about the whereabouts of the church’s funds.” I hurriedly prayed to God, asking Him to help me to not betray Him as Judas did and allow me to stand firm in my witness for Him. A policeman then asked me: “Is this your purse?” When I didn’t respond, he slapped me hard across the face and kicked me several times. Then they forcibly escorted us into their squad car.

After arriving at the public security bureau, we were separated and taken in for interrogation. The captain of the National Security Brigade asked me how high up I was in the leadership and with whom I typically gathered. When I didn’t respond, he picked up a book and smacked me across the face and head with it several times, leaving my face in searing pain. I thought to myself, “What kind of torture will they subject me to in order to get that 200,000 yuan from me? Will I be able to withstand it? What if I break down and betray God like Judas?” As these thoughts occurred to me, I immediately became anxious and asked God to give me faith and strength. Then I thought of God’s words which say: **“Those in power may seem vicious from the outside, but do not be afraid, for this is because you have little faith. As long as your faith grows, nothing will be too difficult”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Utterances of Christ in



the Beginning, Chapter 75). “That’s right,” I thought. “No matter how vicious these policemen may be, they are all within God’s grasp. Without God’s permission, they can’t so much as lay a finger on me. I should have faith in God and put myself in His hands. No matter how the police treat me, I must rely on God and stand firm in my witness for Him.” I angrily asked them, “On what grounds have you arrested and beaten us? What law have we broken?” Another policeman viciously replied: “Still denying your guilt, are you? Believing in Almighty God is against the law, the party and our country!” I replied, saying: “In our faith, all we do is gather and read God’s words. We never take part in politics, so how could we be acting against the party and the country? You’re knowingly violating the law by arresting and beating us without cause.” He became so angry that he was clearly about to hit me, but just then, another officer came and told them to go get dinner and resume questioning later that night.

That evening, they took me to a hotel and grilled me on who was keeping the 200,000 yuan in church funds and where they were located. One of the officers slapped me so hard when I wouldn’t answer that I began to see stars and my cheeks stung with the pain. The captain of the National Security Brigade tried to intimidate me, saying: “Just a few days ago, we arrested several of your upper leaders. We’ve been following you for a while now and we know you’re a leader. You’d better fully cooperate with us or we’ll beat you to death!” I ignored him and just kept praying to God in my heart, asking Him to give me courage and wisdom so that I wouldn’t fear Satan. After that, another officer affected a forced smile and said: “All you have to do is tell us what you know and then you can go home. Your child is still so young and there’s no one else to take care of your parents. How will they manage if you’re not there at home for them? Just tell us what you know now or you’re going to prison!” Hearing this, I thought:

“My parents are both in their seventies and my daughter is still so young. Who will look after them if I’m sentenced to jail?” As I thought this, I couldn’t help but cry. Just then, I thought of God’s words which say: **“At all times, My people should be on guard against the cunning schemes of Satan, guarding the gate of My house for Me ... so as to avoid falling into Satan’s trap, at which time it would be too late for regrets”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. God’s Words to the Entire Universe, Chapter 3). God’s words reminded me that Satan was just trying to use my concern for my family members to tempt me into betraying God. I couldn’t fall into its trap. I thought of another passage of God’s words that says: **“Why do you not entrust them into My hands? Do you not have sufficient faith in Me? Or is it that you are afraid I will make inappropriate arrangements for you? Why do you always worry about the family of your flesh and pine for your loved ones? Do I have a certain place in your heart?”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Utterances of Christ in the Beginning, Chapter 59). Indeed, the fates of my daughter and parents were all within God’s grasp and were His to dictate and arrange, so what did I have to worry about? I should give them over to God and shouldn’t betray my brothers and sisters out of concern for my family. I made a silent oath: “Even if I have to sit in jail for the rest of my days, I will never sell out my brothers and sisters or betray God!” Just then, another officer came in and said that they needed to interrogate the two other sisters first, at which point they moved to an adjacent room, leaving only two officers behind to guard me. Not soon after that, I heard the chilling sound of my sisters’ repeated screams. I felt enraged—as believers and followers of God, we were walking the right path and not breaking any laws, and yet the CCP had arrested and brutalized us! I thought of God’s words which say: **“For thousands of years this has been the land of filth. It is unbearably dirty,**

**misery abounds, ghosts run rampant everywhere, tricking and deceiving, making groundless accusations, being ruthless and vicious, trampling this ghost town and leaving it littered with dead bodies; the stench of decay covers the land and pervades the air, and it is heavily guarded. Who can see the world beyond the skies? ... Forefathers of the ancient? Beloved leaders? They all oppose God! Their meddling has left all beneath heaven in a state of darkness and chaos! Religious freedom? The legitimate rights and interests of citizens? They are all tricks for covering up sin!”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Work and Entry (8)). The CCP is a devil that hates and resists God. God’s incarnation and salvation of humanity is a truly joyous occasion, but the CCP doesn’t permit God to come to earth. They won’t allow us to believe in God, follow God and walk the right path. They furiously pursue Christ and come down hard on God’s followers. They are devoted to rooting us all out, eradicating us and suppressing God’s work to achieve eternal sovereignty and satisfy their wild ambition to control humanity; they are truly antagonistic. I hated the CCP, this old demon, with all my heart, and the more they persecuted me, the more I desired to follow God. No matter how much I had to suffer, I was willing to stand firm in my witness for God to humiliate Satan.

Later, a little after 4 o’clock in the morning, the guards lay down on their beds and went to sleep. I had an incredible urge to run out of there and escape, but I also worried that if I didn’t succeed and were brought back in, the police would use even harsher torture tactics on me. I hurriedly prayed to God: “Oh God! If You’ve opened this way out for me, please fill me with the faith, courage and wisdom I need to escape from this lion’s den.” After concluding my prayer, I thought of God’s words, which say: **“Of everything that occurs in the universe, there is nothing in which I do not have the final say. Is there anything that is not in My hands?”** (The

Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. God's Words to the Entire Universe, Chapter 1).

God's words gave me strength: God is almighty and rules sovereign over all things. Satan is also within God's grasp. I thought of how when Moses was leading the Israelites out of Egypt and was trapped between the pursuing chariots behind them and the Red Sea before them, Moses earnestly called out to Jehovah God and God opened up a path for them, parting the waters of the Red Sea and unveiling a strip of dry land along the middle. After the Israelites had passed through the Red Sea, God swiftly closed up the pathway through the high waters, swallowing up the pursuing Egyptians in the process. Realizing that all things are subject to God's sovereignty, I felt less afraid and had the courage and faith to flee. I quietly opened the door and gently closed it on my way out before slowly making my way down to the first floor, slippers in hand. There was no one at the front desk, but when I got to the entrance to the building, I saw it was locked. I thought: "I won't be able to escape now. I'd better head back. If the police find out what I've done, they'll be sure to give me a hard beating." I was incredibly nervous and my heart was beating out of my chest. Yet, to my surprise, on my way back to the second stairwell, I suddenly noticed there was a back exit. So I slowly walked over to have a look, but that door was also locked—another disappointment. I thought: "Oh God! I won't try to escape if You do not permit it. I'm willing to submit to Your orchestrations and arrangements. If I do have Your permission, then please open up a path for me." I carefully tugged on the lock and, to my surprise, it opened right up! I was so happy and ran out the back door as fast as I could. I ran with all my might, and, after a grueling journey, I finally made it to my aunt's house some 4 kilometers away.

Just after I'd sat down in my aunt's house, I suddenly heard the piercing wail of police sirens coming from the street—the same kind they

used when they were pursuing serious criminals. At the mere thought of the ferocious faces of those officers and their various torture tactics, I became panicked and worried that they'd snatch me up at any moment. Just then, God's words once again lent me encouragement: **“Do not fear, the Almighty God of hosts will surely be with you; He stands behind you and He is your shield”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Utterances of Christ in the Beginning, Chapter 26). God's words gave me an instant influx of courage and faith. With God behind me what did I have to be afraid of? Hadn't God already helped deliver me from the lion's den? I had to have faith in God and put myself entirely in His hands. How much I would suffer had already been predestined by God, and if I were arrested again, it would only be with His permission. At this thought, I felt a little calmer, but then I thought about how my aunt's son and daughter-in-law both objected to her believing in God and had even wanted to send her off to the police station on more than one occasion. I wasn't sure what they'd do if they found out the CCP was looking for me, so I knew I had to leave there as quickly as possible.

To ensure that I wouldn't be recognized, I cut my hair short and changed my clothes. Then, on the third morning of my stay with my aunt, at around 4 o'clock in the morning, I slipped out of the house and rode 20 kilometers on my bike along backroads to Sister Dong En's house. I remembered that I had promised a few sisters to call them every day at around noon, but they didn't know I'd been arrested and the police had my phone—if they called me, they'd be monitored and eventually arrested. So I bought a new phone card and called to tell them to turn off their phones right away. Unfortunately, the police were already monitoring their calls and as soon as I contacted them, they immediately pinpointed my location. A few days later at around 7 o'clock in the evening, the CCP mobilized a

massive police force consisting of public security bureau officers, armed police and SWAT operatives to seek out and arrest me in Dong En's village. As soon as Dong En's husband found out, he hurriedly told me that the police had the village surrounded and they had probably come to get me. At that moment, my heart began beating out of my chest with fright and I hurriedly ran downstairs without even changing out my slippers. When I got down to the first floor, I was immediately greeted by Sister Liu Yi, who also lived in the same village. She grabbed hold of me and we both sprinted out of the house to a soybean field about fifty meters away. No sooner had we crouched down in that field than a team of seven or eight officers charged into Dong En's house and began searching every floor with flashlights. When they still hadn't found me after searching for over half an hour, they took Dong En's husband instead. Liu Yi and I hid out in that soybean field until around 11 o'clock that night, at which point she decided to go back into Dong En's house to see how things were, believing that the police had already left. She was gone for a long time, and I felt terribly worried for her, but I didn't dare act rashly. Then suddenly, a police car pulled up outside of the house and, moments later, I had to watch helplessly as they escorted Liu Yi into the squad car. I couldn't hold back my tears and I hated myself for allowing Liu Yi to go back in the house, but all I could do then was say a silent prayer for her.

At that time, I didn't dare go to any of the other brothers' and sisters' houses and I didn't know where I should flee to, so I just began aimlessly running south. But some of the village dogs wouldn't stop chasing after me and barking. I was afraid the police would come looking if they heard them, so I quickly hid out in a corn field. Not soon after, I heard scooter engines revving around in the vicinity and was nearly scared out of my wits. I thought to myself: "There's no way I'll be able to escape with so many

police out here looking for me. They know I'm a leader and they have that receipt—if they catch me again, they'll certainly kill me. Is it really my fate to be murdered by the CCP at such a young age?" Realizing this, I became a bit despondent, but just then I remembered that God's words say: **"Who of the whole of mankind is not cared for in the eyes of the Almighty? Who does not live in the midst of the Almighty's predestination? Does man's life and death happen by his own choice? Does man control his own fate?"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. God's Words to the Entire Universe, Chapter 11). Indeed, my fate was in God's hands, and He had the final say over whether I would live or die. If God didn't permit me to be arrested and tortured to death by the CCP, the police would certainly be unable to take my life. When Satan attacked and tempted Job, it did not have God's permission to kill Job, so it could only harm his body and couldn't take his life. I thought of another passage of God's words that says: **"During these last days you must bear testimony to God. No matter how great your suffering, you should walk until the very end, and even at your last breath, still you must be faithful to God and at the mercy of God; only this is truly loving God, and only this is the strong and resounding testimony"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Only by Experiencing Painful Trials Can You Know the Loveliness of God). God's words filled me with faith. I knew I needed to put myself in God's hands and submit to His orchestrations and arrangements. Even if I only had one remaining breath, I had to remain loyal to God and never betray Him. I thought of Peter, who after experiencing all manner of persecution and hardships, was willing to be crucified upside down to bear witness for his love of God. Throughout the ages, countless saints have sacrificed their lives to spread the gospel, bearing an unyielding and resounding testimony to God to foil and humiliate Satan. To be able to experience this persecution and hardship and

have the opportunity to bear witness for God was, in fact, a blessing. Realizing this, I felt a renewed sense of courage and so I prayed to God, vowing to Him that I would bear witness to Him before Satan even if it meant putting my life on the line. After prayer, I felt less panicked and I began thinking of how I could rely on God to escape. I knew I couldn't take a main road, so I circled round to the forest on the outskirts of the village and made my way through it, sometimes running along the river's edge. With God's safekeeping, I finally managed to escape from the village unharmed.

When I emerged from the forest, it was already late at night and I wasn't sure where I should go, so I decided to head for my sister's house, some 10 kilometers away. I heard scooters driving along the main road and realized that the police were still trying to encircle me and cut me off, so I ran barefoot through small paths in the wilderness. After about two or three kilometers, I passed through some rice paddies and cut my foot on a tile, but there was no time to attend to the pain—I kept on running forward as fast as I could. Eventually I came to a gravel road, which was the only road that led to my sister's house. The gravel pressed into the cut on my foot, causing me agonizing pain, but I just had to grit my teeth as I didn't dare stop. Right when I was about to pass by an electric pump station, I heard a scooter coming up behind me and hurriedly ducked into some bushes on the side of the road. The scooter stopped by the station and a police officer asked the old man who was working as an attendant there if he'd seen a woman walk by. The old man said he hadn't seen anything. I thought to myself: "I can't keep traveling on this gravel road. I should go back to walking along the rice paddies or backroads; I might be able to evade the police that way." After another half kilometer or so, seeing that daybreak was slowly approaching, I figured the police might have called it quits after



searching for me all night and I could head back to the main road. But to my surprise, I suddenly caught sight of the captain of the National Security Brigade and two police just a few paces away, one sitting on a scooter, one standing beside the scooter and another squatting on the ground. I was so frightened I thought my heart would leap right out of my chest. I thought to myself, “Now I’m screwed, there’s no way I can escape now. I ran all night, but I still didn’t manage to escape their clutches.” I hurriedly prayed to God: “Oh God! All things are within Your control. If You allow me to be arrested by the police, I am willing to submit and let everything proceed according to Your orchestrations.” After praying, I felt a bit calmer and, after smoothing out my hair, I stood where I was for a few seconds and then took a step forward. If they wanted to arrest me, they could have easily done so right then, but to my surprise, they stayed right where they were, as motionless as a trio of wooden carvings. It seemed that they didn’t recognize me because I had cut my hair and changed my clothes, and I looked completely different from when they first arrested me. Seeing that they didn’t seem to be reacting to me, I felt a little braver and more confident and I kept walking forward. As I walked past them, I was holding my breath nervously; it was as if everything around me had frozen. I saw a little road heading east, so I slowly walked toward it, but the three officers still hadn’t budged. I had once again beheld God’s almighty sovereignty. When I had gotten about 10 meters away from them, I heard the captain yell out from behind me, “Xiao Kang, Xiao Kang, is that you Xiao Kang?” He must have yelled out at me four or five times. When I heard him yelling my name, my heart was beating out of my chest, and I broke out in a cold sweat. I wanted more than anything to take off in a mad dash, but my legs weren’t listening to my brain’s commands. It occurred to me that if I made a run for it, they’d know it was me and would come chasing after me. I

hurriedly prayed to God, asking Him to keep me calm and not let me panic. After praying, I felt a little calmer and no matter how the police called to me, I just ignored them and kept walking. None of the police came chasing after me. Just like that, with God's safekeeping, I escaped from right under their noses.

This incredibly risky escape made me think of a passage of God's words: **"Regardless of how 'powerful' Satan is, regardless of how audacious and ambitious it is, regardless of how great is its ability to inflict damage, regardless of how wide-ranging are the techniques with which it corrupts and lures man, regardless of how clever are the tricks and schemes with which it intimidates man, regardless of how changeable is the form in which it exists, it has never been able to create a single living thing, has never been able to set down laws or rules for the existence of all things, and has never been able to rule and control any object, whether animate or inanimate. Within the cosmos and the firmament, there is not a single person or object that was born from it, or exists because of it; there is not a single person or object that is ruled by it, or controlled by it. On the contrary, it not only has to live under the dominion of God, but, moreover, must submit to all of God's orders and commands. Without God's permission, it is difficult for Satan to touch even a drop of water or grain of sand upon the land; without God's permission, Satan is not even free to move the ants about upon the land, let alone mankind, who was created by God"** (The Word, Vol. 2. On Knowing God. God Himself, the Unique I). I saw that God is almighty, rules sovereign over all things and has the utmost and ultimate authority. It was God that blinded the policemen, allowing me to slip by unnoticed. Looking back on these two instances of the CCP's repression and arrest, I realized that there is nowhere that God's powers don't reach. When I was arrested,

God opened up a way out for me, allowing me to escape without incident. The police mobilized a massive operation to find and arrest me, encircling the house and village I was staying in, but they still weren't able to catch me. Then they tried to chase me down and cut me off on the road, but they somehow didn't recognize me when I walked right by them. The more I thought about it, the more I felt that God is truly almighty and, no matter how savagely Satan acts, it can't lay a finger on me without God's permission.

Later on, some brothers and sisters told me that the CCP had posted wanted signs displaying my picture with a caption that read "Severe disruptor of social order" throughout the county. Police were also going through city buses with my picture asking if anyone knew of my whereabouts. Because the police were still searching for me, I couldn't go out at all to do my duties and had to hide out in my host family's home, and I was constantly on edge. After that, I didn't go outside for over a year, and I felt so repressed and dejected. Sometimes I felt like it was just too difficult and painful to believe in God in the great red dragon's country. I saw a passage of God's words that say: **"Because it is embarked upon in a land that opposes God, all of God's work faces tremendous obstacles, and accomplishing many of His words takes time; thus, people are refined as a result of God's words, which is also part of suffering. It is tremendously difficult for God to carry out His work in the land of the great red dragon—but it is through this difficulty that God does one stage of His work, making manifest His wisdom and His wondrous deeds, and using this opportunity to make this group of people complete"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Is the Work of God As Simple As Man Imagines?). I realized that God wasn't intentionally making people suffer, rather, He was using the adverse circumstances created by the CCP's

arrest and persecution of believers to perfect people's faith and love and make a group of overcomers.

Looking back on this whole experience—from being arrested, to escaping and up until now—I've faced quite a bit of hardship, but it's allowed me to clearly recognize the demonic essence of the CCP's resistance to God. The CCP is no longer able to mislead me and I've rebelled against and abandoned it. At the same time, I've seen up close and personal that God has been with me every step of the way, helping me whenever I was in need and opening up a way for me again and again. God's words have given me faith and strength and guided me out of the lion's den time after time. I've seen God's almighty sovereignty and this has deepened my faith in God. The more I think about it, the more I realize that I have gained so much through this hardship and persecution. With this in mind, I don't find it bitter anymore, but rather feel as though God has shown me grace and favored me by letting me experience His work through this difficult situation. No matter how the CCP hunts for and persecutes me, I will continue to pursue the truth, fulfill my duty and repay God's love!

## **59. The Importance of the Correct Attitude in Your Duty**

By Ella, the Philippines

In October of 2020, I accepted the work of Almighty God in the last days. I actively attended gatherings and fellowshiped on my understanding of God's words, and two months later, I became the leader of a gathering group. I remember that the first time I hosted a gathering, I was both excited and nervous. I was excited to do my duty, but I was nervous because I was afraid that if I didn't host well, my brothers and sisters might look down on me. I thought the way our church leader hosted gatherings was very good, so if I did it her way, I was sure I could host the gathering well. Then, the church leader would praise me, and my brothers and sisters would look up to me. So, I hosted the gathering by imitating our church leader. When I asked my brothers and sisters questions, they interacted with me, and when I fellowshiped, they said "Amen" in agreement. After the gathering, the church leader said that I'd hosted well. I felt very happy and proud when I heard the leader's praise. Not long after, I was chosen as watering deacon. I was very excited, and I thought that it might be because I had a good caliber that I was chosen for the position. At first, I didn't know how to do the work, but I didn't want my brothers and sisters to be disappointed in me. So, at each gathering, I focused on finding the crucial elements discussed in God's words. That way, my fellowship would be clear and cover the key points, and my brothers and sisters would think I had a good understanding and admire me. But, after I fellowshiped, when I listened to others' fellowship, I noticed that what I had communicated hadn't been so clear. I was very worried and thought, "Nobody will think I fellowship well, and everyone's attention will be on those who fellowship

better than me.” I feared that my brothers and sisters would look down on me, so I always tried to fellowship better. But I couldn’t calm myself enough to contemplate God’s words. The more I wanted to fellowship well, the worse my fellowship became. I thought, “What will my brothers and sisters think of me? Will the church leader be disappointed in me? Why isn’t my fellowship as clear as others’? Why do they fellowship so well but I don’t?” I was unwilling to admit defeat and thought I should work harder to surpass others.

A few months later, because of the church’s work requirements, I was sent to preach the gospel. Once I got there, I asked who the group leaders were and who the church leader was. I thought, as long as I did my best, I could earn the church leader’s approval and possibly be made a group leader. That way, my brothers and sisters would look up to me. When sharing the gospel, I often prayed to and relied on God when there were things I didn’t understand or couldn’t do. After a while, I got some good results in performing my duty, and this made me very happy. But I also felt guilty because I knew I had the wrong mindset. I was working hard only because I wanted others to look up to me, not because I wanted to do my duty well. God was scrutinizing my mind, and He certainly hated my pursuit. I came before God and prayed; I was willing to rebel against my mistaken intent. After I prayed, I felt a little better. However, I still often could not help but try to make others look up to me. When I saw others getting good results from doing their duties, I wanted to surpass them. I knew it was wrong to think this way, but I couldn’t control myself. I couldn’t calm myself enough to do my duty. My state grew worse and worse, and I became ineffective in doing my duty. So I prayed to God, asking Him to help and guide me in knowing myself.

One day, I saw a passage of God's words in an experiential testimony video that gave me a little knowledge of myself. Almighty God says: **"Antichrists reluctantly do their duty in order to obtain blessings. They also inquire whether they will be able to put themselves on display and be looked up to by doing this duty, and whether the Above or God will know if they do this duty. These are all things they consider when they do a duty. The first thing they want to determine is what benefits they can get by doing a duty and whether they can be blessed. This is the most important thing to them. They never think about how to be considerate of God's intentions and repay God's love, how to preach the gospel and testify to God so that people gain God's salvation and obtain happiness, much less do they ever seek to understand the truth, or seek how to resolve their corrupt dispositions and live out a human likeness. They never consider these things. They only think about whether they can be blessed and gain benefits, how to gain a foothold, how to gain status, how to make people look up to them, and how to distinguish themselves and become the best in the church and in the crowd. They are absolutely not willing to be ordinary followers. They always want to be the first in the church, have the final say, become leaders, and make everyone listen to them. Only then can they be satisfied. You can see that antichrists' hearts are full of these things. Do they genuinely expend for God? Do they genuinely do their duty as created beings? (No.) Then what do they want to do? (To hold power.) That's right. They say, 'As for me, in the secular world I want to outdo everyone else. I have to be the first in any group. I refuse to come in second, and I will never be a sidekick. I want to be a leader and have the final say in any group of people I'm in. If I don't have the final say, then I will try all the means possible to convince you all, to make you**

**all look up to me, and to make you choose me as the leader. Once I have status, I will have the final say, everyone will have to listen to me. You will have to do things my way, and you will have to be under my control.’ No matter what duty the antichrists do, they will try to put themselves in a high position, in a position of primacy. They could never be content with their place as an ordinary follower. And what are they most passionate about? It is standing in front of people giving orders and telling people off, making people do as they say. They never think about how to do their duty properly—much less, while doing their duty, do they seek the truth principles in order to practice the truth and satisfy God. Instead, they rack their brains for ways to distinguish themselves, to make the leaders think highly of them and promote them, so that they themselves can become a leader or worker, and can lead other people. This is what they spend all day thinking about and hoping for. Antichrists are not willing to be led by others, nor are they willing to be an ordinary follower, much less to go quietly about doing their duty without fanfare. Whatever their duty, if they cannot be front and center, if they cannot be above others and lead other people, they find doing their duty boring, and become negative and start slacking. Without the praise or worship of others, it is even less interesting to them, and they have even less desire to do their duty. But if they can be front and center while doing their duty and get to have the final say, they feel fortified, and will suffer any hardship. They always have personal intentions in the performance of their duty, and they always want to distinguish themselves as a means to satisfy their need to beat other people, and satisfy their desires and ambitions” (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Nine (Part Seven)). After reading God’s words, I immediately thought about all I had done. I felt like all of my thoughts and**



actions had been exposed to the light. God's words revealed that antichrists never think about how to pursue the truth to do their duty well. Instead, they pursue high status and want to lead others. They don't allow others to rise above them, and they walk the path of resisting God. I thought back on how all of my various behaviors were the same as those of antichrists: As soon as I started to do my duty, I wanted everyone else to look up to me. I imitated the church leader when I hosted gatherings. I put a lot of effort into contemplating God's words during gatherings, hoping to fellowship clearly and in an organized way. My intention was not to achieve good results from the gatherings, but to show everyone that I fellowshiped in a good and clear way. It was to receive the praise of my brothers and sisters. After going to spread the gospel, I didn't think about how to fulfill my duty to satisfy God. Instead, I first asked who the group leaders and the church leader were, hoping I would be selected as group leader through my efforts. I did my utmost to show off in front of my brothers and sisters and compared myself with them. When I saw others attaining good results from doing their duty, I was jealous, and I always wanted to surpass them and be the best. Everything I did was for the sake of my reputation and status, and it was all in an attempt to satisfy my competitive desire. How could God not hate my pursuit? A duty is a commission from God, and it is an obligation and responsibility we should fulfill, but I treated it like my own career. I used my duty to pursue status and achieve my goal of making people look up to me. How could harboring this improper intent in performing my duty accord with God's intention? I hated myself for being so corrupt. I didn't want to live like this anymore. I wanted to change as soon as possible.

A few days later, I was transferred to another group to spread the gospel. When I first started, I only wanted to focus on gospel work and do my duty well. I noticed that the brothers and sisters there performed their

duties very well. When preaching the gospel, they fellowshiped on the truth of God's work very clearly, and many of those who heard the gospel were willing to seek and investigate it. When I thought about how my own preaching was ineffective and my fellowshiping on the truth unclear, I felt I was very disappointing. At that time, my arrogance gradually dissipated. I didn't dare think so highly of myself anymore, and I didn't want to try to make others look up to me. At first, I thought I had achieved some change, but when I saw my brothers and sisters receive praise for performing their duties well, I didn't want to be left in the background. When spreading the gospel, I frantically invited people to listen to sermons, but I didn't try to find out if they truly believed in God or if they met the requirements for evangelism. As a result, I invited some disbelievers to sermons, and before long, they left the gathering group. I was very sad and thought, "Why is it like this? I did my duty ineffectively. What will my brothers and sisters think of me? Will they think I'm worse than them?" In those days, I felt very negative, and I wanted to cry during gatherings, but I always remembered a passage of God's words: **"Are your goals and intentions made with Me in mind? Are all your words and actions said and done in My presence? I examine all of your thoughts and ideas. Do you not feel guilty?"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Utterances of Christ in the Beginning, Chapter 13). God's words reminded me that I should further reflect and examine whether I had an incorrect intent in doing my duty. Through reflection, I realized my old problem had returned: I wanted to gain people's attention and high regard by doing my duty well. When I realized this, I was very distraught. Why was my desire for status so strong and my corruption so deep? Even worse, I was numb to it. I didn't even realize my improper state.

One time, when I was discussing my state with a sister, she sent me a passage of God's words. I finally gained some knowledge of myself after I read it. God's words say: **"Some people particularly idolize Paul. They like to go out and give speeches and do work, they like to attend gatherings and preach, and they like to have people listen to them, worship them, and revolve around them. They like to hold a place in the hearts of others, and they appreciate it when others value the image they present. Let us dissect their nature from these behaviors. What is their nature? If they really behave like this, then it is sufficient in showing that they are arrogant and conceited. They do not worship God at all; they seek higher status and wish to have authority over others, to possess them, and to hold a position in their hearts. This is the classic image of Satan. The aspects of their nature that stand out are arrogance and conceit, an unwillingness to worship God, and a desire to be worshiped by others. Such behaviors can give you a very clear view into their nature"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. How to Know Man's Nature). After reading God's words, I started to reflect on myself. God says Paul liked people worshiping him and revolving around him, that he liked to have status in the minds of others, and that he appreciated it when others value the image he presented. I also wanted my brothers and sisters to look up to me. At gatherings, I wanted to fellowship better than others. In doing my duty, when I saw others achieve better results from their work than me, my competitive nature emerged. I wanted to do better than them and surpass them. All I said and did was full of ambition and desire, and my disposition was too arrogant. My intent and behavior was the same as Paul's. Paul's nature was proud and arrogant. He didn't worship God, he showed off and testified about himself everywhere, he tried to make others look up to him and worship him, and he wanted to

have a place in other people's minds. I was the same. No matter what duty I performed, all I did was for fame and status, not to fulfill my duty to satisfy God. In my pursuit, I was resisting God and would be condemned by Him. This is because the pursuit of status is not just meant to gain a standing or title; it is meant to gain a place in people's minds and make others worship you. Just as God says: **"This is the classic image of Satan."** It is really too frightening! To win the admiration of others, I pursued quick success in doing my duty, and preached the gospel without principle, which let some disbelievers into the gathering group and wasted the time and energy of the gospel workers. If these people had then entered into the church, the situation would have been much worse, and they could have disturbed church work. The nature of this problem was extremely serious! If I didn't repent and change, God would certainly detest me, so I didn't want to pursue status and the admiration of others anymore.

At the next gatherings, I listened carefully to the fellowship of my brothers and sisters and saw that everyone was diligently doing their duty. There was one sister whose experience was especially moving for me. She fellowshiped how she relied on God to overcome difficulties in performing her duties and how she spread the gospel. After hearing this, I asked myself, "Do I treat my duty seriously? Am I practicing according to God's words? Everyone else has real experience and testimony of practicing the truth in different environments. Why don't I? Why isn't my intent to perform my duty well?" I felt very guilty. I didn't perform my duty conscientiously. Instead of working properly, I wholeheartedly pursued people's admiration. I really didn't deserve to be given any duties. During that time, I seriously reflected on myself, and I remembered Peter's experience. Peter never showed off or sought the admiration of others. He focused on seeking the truth in everything, reflecting on and understanding his own corruption, and

trying to change his life disposition. He walked a successful path of belief in God. I also wanted to pursue dispositional change, so I often prayed to God, asking Him to guide me in knowing myself. Whenever I wanted to pursue people's admiration when doing my duty, I would consciously rebel against my wrong intent. I wanted to escape my corrupt disposition as soon as possible and perform my duty well.

One day, I read a passage of God's words and found a path of practice. God's words say: **"If God made you foolish, then there is meaning in your foolishness; if He made you bright, then there is meaning in your brightness. Whatever talents God gives you, whatever your strengths, however high your IQ, they all have a purpose for God. All these things were preordained by God. The role you play in your life and the duty you do were ordained by God long ago. Some people see that others possess strengths they do not and are discontent. They want to change things by learning more, seeing more, and being more diligent. But there is a limit to what their diligence can achieve, and they cannot surpass those with gifts and expertise. No matter how much you fight, it is useless. God has ordained what you will be, and there is nothing anyone can do to change it. Whatever you are good at, that is where you should make an effort. Whatever duty you are suited to is the duty you should perform. Do not try to force yourself into areas outside your skillset and do not envy others. Everyone has their function. Do not think that you can do everything well, or that you are more perfect or better than others, always desiring to replace others and put yourself on display. This is a corrupt disposition. There are those who think that they cannot do anything well, and that they have no skills at all. If that is the case, you should just be a person who listens and submits in a down-to-earth manner. Do what you can and do it well, with all your**

**strength. That is enough. God will be satisfied”** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. The Principles That Should Guide One’s Conduct). After reading God’s words, I was very moved. I understood that I was so exhausted and went through so much torment all because I didn’t put my energy into doing my duty. Rather, I used my energy to pursue reputation and status. God preordains whether someone’s caliber is high or low, what kind of talents and gifts they have, and what function they can fulfill. God wants us to do the best we can within the limits of our own ability. He doesn’t ask us to try to stand out from the crowd and be superior to others. Even before I was born, God had arranged everything for me. God preordained what caliber, talents, and gifts I would have; what duties I would be suitable to perform; and everything else. I was meant to submit to God’s sovereignty and arrangements, keep my place, exert my abilities in a down-to-earth manner, and perform my duty well. After careful thought, I realized that I didn’t have any special skills, so I just needed to listen to God’s words: **“You should just be a person who listens and submits in a down-to-earth manner. Do what you can and do it well, with all your strength. That is enough. God will be satisfied.”** I was willing to practice according to God’s words and sincerely perform my role.

I saw a sister who did her duty very effectively. I was very envious and a little jealous. I thought, “How does she do it?” I felt the urge to surpass her again, but I realized I was exposing my corruption, so I prayed to God to rebel against myself. After I prayed, I thought, “We all have different functions, just like a machine has different parts and each part has a different function. My sister has her strengths and achieves good results in doing her duty. This is a good thing. I shouldn’t compare myself to her; I should learn from her.” After that, whenever my sister fellowshipped her path and gains in performing her duty, I listened carefully and took notes. I

also looked to other brothers and sisters for their experience in gospel work. During gatherings, I calmed myself and contemplated God's words, fellowshiped on what I understood of His words, and no longer pursued the admiration of others. When I practiced like this, my desire for status and reputation gradually diminished. I didn't feel as jealous as before, and I felt much more relaxed and liberated.

## 60. Hypocrisy Is So Painful

By Su Wan, China

In August 2020, I got dismissed because I'd been muddling through my duty without doing any real work. Afterward, I felt terrible and was filled with regret, and wanted to repent and do my duty well in the future.

Later on, I was assigned to make videos together with a few other sisters. One day I got chatting with Sister Yang Fan about some reflections and understandings I'd come to after being dismissed. She was deeply affected by what I had to say and from then on, I noticed her attitude toward me had changed. When I spoke about my experiences in gatherings, she listened really intently and kept nodding along, and she'd usually agree with my opinions. She also seemed more caring toward me on a day-to-day basis. I thought to myself: "She seems to look up to me. I've talked about what I've learned and expressed sincere repentance, so I should put that into practice. What would she think if she didn't see any change in me? Would she think I was all talk and that I didn't practice the truth? Would her good image of me disappear?" At this thought I was kind of anxious and worried, and I no longer wanted to simply perform my duty well. Sometimes I would be sitting making videos for a long time, and my back would get sore. I'd want to relax a little, but I was afraid my sisters would think I was slacking off. I thought to myself: "I've said I would do my duty well and no longer slack off, I must let them see me put my words into action." So I wouldn't dare to take breaks when I was tired, afraid they would think I was heeding my fleshly needs and that I wasn't having any burden in my duty. I didn't dare go to bed early when I was sleepy. Even if I'd finished my work, I'd force myself to keep going and wouldn't switch off my computer until 11:30 or 12 at night. Sometimes I stayed up late and could hardly get up in



the morning, but I'd see my sisters getting up early, and I'd not dare to sleep in, afraid of giving them a bad impression of me. Once, I saw Yang Fan had a couple videos to work on, but I didn't plan to help her because they were difficult, and I didn't want to bother with that. But then I thought that I didn't have any projects of my own, so if I didn't offer to help, she would surely think I was all talk, and just spouted words and doctrines without pursuing the truth. So I went to help Yang Fan with the videos.

At that time, although I seemed to be throwing myself into my duty, I knew in my heart that it was all to protect my image and status. I felt very unsettled by this and wanted to open up to my sisters about my state, but I was afraid they'd know that I'd had ulterior motives the whole time, and they'd think I hadn't really repented and that I didn't practice the truth. They'd probably see me as a deceitful hypocrite and even discount everything I said I'd learned after my dismissal. These thoughts made me reluctant to open up to everyone. In gatherings I just talked about corruptions that everyone often revealed, as well as some positive experiential knowledge, while keeping my thoughts hidden deep inside me. Since I was only fellowshipping about positive experiences, my sisters looked up to me even more, and in one gathering Yang Fan praised me for being able to practice the truth and fellowship the truth so clearly. I heard later on that a couple of other sisters said that I pursued the truth, that I opened up frankly about my corruption, and that I was quite actively engaged in my duty. I felt kind of pleased, but even more so, I felt a sense of shame and unease, because I knew that what they were saying was not even close to reality. I wasn't frank at all, I had never opened up about the corruption within me and there were other motives behind the enthusiasm I had for my duty. I thought to myself: "This is terrible. Everyone has been misled by my facade—what should I do?" I felt really guilty and wanted to

open up to my sisters, to stop fooling them, but if I did, they would know those thoughts and motives of mine, and they'd think I was a deceitful person. My good image would vanish and no one would look up to me. When I thought about this, I lost the nerve to open up to the others.

Later, I read a passage of God's words: **"Do you know what a Pharisee actually is? Are there any Pharisees around you? Why are these people called 'Pharisees'? How are Pharisees described? They are people who are hypocritical, completely fake, and put on an act in everything they do. What act do they put on? They pretend to be good, kind, and positive. Is this what they are actually like? Absolutely not. Given that they are hypocrites, everything that is manifested and revealed in them is false; it is all pretense—it is not their true face. Where is their true face hidden? It is hidden deep within their hearts, never to be seen by others. Everything on the outside is an act, it is all fake, but they can only fool people; they cannot fool God. If people do not pursue the truth, if they do not practice and experience God's words, then they cannot truly understand the truth, and so no matter how nice-sounding their words are, these words are not the truth reality, but words and doctrines. Some people only focus on parroting words and doctrines, they ape whoever preaches the highest sermons, with the result that in just a few years their recital of words and doctrines grows ever more advanced, and they are admired and venerated by many people, after which they start to camouflage themselves, and pay great attention to what they say and do, showing themselves to be especially pious and spiritual. They use these so-called spiritual theories to camouflage themselves. This is all they talk about wherever they go, specious things that fit with people's notions, but which lack any of the truth reality. And through preaching these things**

**—things that are in line with people’s notions and tastes—they mislead many people. To others, such people seem very devout and humble, but it is actually fake; they seem tolerant, forbearing, and loving, but it is actually a pretense; they say they love God, but it is actually an act. Others think such people holy, but it is actually fake. Where can a person who is truly holy be found? Human holiness is all fake. It is all an act, a pretense. On the outside, they appear loyal to God, but they are actually just performing for others to see. When no one is looking, they are not the slightest bit loyal, and everything they do is perfunctory. Superficially, they expend themselves for God and have given up their families and careers. But what are they doing in secret? They are conducting their own enterprise and running their own operation in the church, profiting from the church and stealing offerings secretly under the guise of working for God.... These people are the modern hypocritical Pharisees”** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Six Indicators of Life Growth). As I pondered on the word of God, I thought of how the Pharisees appeared so devout, humble, and loving. They were always standing in the street praying and explaining the scripture in synagogues, but they weren’t truly following God’s words. They acted virtuous on the outside to camouflage and disguise themselves. They used some methods and tricks to deceive people and give them a false impression, so that they’d be worshiped and admired. Comparing my own behaviors, was I not just as hypocritical as those Pharisees? To make my sisters think I had truly repented, that I wasn’t just all talk, and to safeguard my good image, I always had put on an act to hide and disguise my true self. I didn’t dare rest when I was exhausted by my duty or sleep when I got tired at night, and I’d force myself out of bed without having had enough rest. I clearly didn’t want to help Yang Fan with the videos, but I wanted her

to think highly of me, so I reluctantly lent her my assistance. Yet in reality, I had no genuine burden for this duty. On the outside I pretended to be active and to take initiative, and even though I clearly knew that I had the wrong intentions in my duty, that I was cheating the others, and that I should open up to them, I hid all those despicable motives and didn't tell anyone about them in order to protect my image. This led to my sisters kind of admiring me. Was this not deceptive and misleading of me? I was truly deceitful and I was on the same path as the hypocritical Pharisees. I was putting on an act all the time. Not only was living like that exhausting, it made me feel guilty, and it disgusted and revolted God. After realizing what a serious problem it was, I mustered up the courage in a gathering to open up with my sisters about what the motives behind my actions had been during that period and how my hypocrisy had manifested. I felt such a sense of relief after that, and my state changed for the better. But I also felt like it would be really hard for me to correct the intentions I harbored behind my duty, so I came before God in prayer, asking Him to guide me to resolve this problem and to do my duty with a pure and honest heart.

Then one day, I read some of God's words: **"God does not perfect those who are deceitful. If your heart is not honest—if you are not an honest person—then you will not be gained by God. Likewise, you will not gain the truth, and will also be incapable of gaining God"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Six Indicators of Life Growth). Reading this was really painful. I was so deceitful, my mind was full of devious thoughts, not on how to practice the truth and perform my duty properly, but rather how to gain admiration, and how to make a good impression on others. I was even endlessly worrying about and calculating when to sleep. God likes simple and honest people, and only honest people can gain His approval and are worthy of His salvation. But my motive was always

deceitful. No matter how well I covered it up, or even if I could gain everyone's admiration and adoration, I wouldn't be saved by God. In the end I'd be detested and damned by God like those hypocritical Pharisees. When I thought this, I was so disappointed in myself. Over all those years of faith, I hadn't entered into the truth reality as basic as honesty, and I was just as deceitful as ever. I saw that I really was far from what God required.

I also read another passage of God's words: **"In all matters, you should lay everything bare to God and you should be candid—this is the only condition and state that should be maintained before God. Even when you do not open up, you are open before God. From God's perspective, He knows the facts, whether you open up about it or not. Are you not very foolish if you cannot see through to that? So how can you be a smart person? By opening yourself up to God. You know that God scrutinizes and knows everything, so don't think yourself clever, and think that He might not know; since it is certain that God secretly observes people's hearts, smart people should be a little more candid, a little purer, and be honest—that is the wise thing to do"** (The Word, Vol. 4.

Exposing Antichrists. Item Eight: They Would Have Others Submit Only to Them, Not the Truth or God (Part Two)). That's right. God sees into our hearts and minds, so He knows my motives and exactly what sort of person I am. No matter how I hid my corruption from everyone, God would know about it all. I believed in God but I couldn't accept His scrutiny. To gain the admiration and praise of others I had pretended to be someone who pursued the truth and had truly repented. I had tormented myself to the point of exhaustion, I was so foolish and pathetic! In reality, as long as we aren't being slippery or indulging the flesh, needing rest when we're tired or sleepy is normal, but I'd even denied these laws of human work and rest. Everything I did was just to get people to look up to me. Living like this was so exhausting. God says wise people

need to learn to be openhearted, to accept God's scrutiny and to be simple and honest. Only by living like this can you free yourself. Knowing this, I didn't want to pretend anymore. Afterward, I would take a break when I was tired from my duty, and at night, I would go to bed after work when I was sleepy. I would open up and fellowship about my real state in gatherings, and proactively fulfill my responsibilities in my duty. When things were tough, I'd tell myself it was my duty and that I wasn't doing it for anybody else to see. Whenever I had the urge to put on an act, I'd think of these words from God: **"Those who are capable of putting the truth into practice can accept God's scrutiny in the things they do. When you accept God's scrutiny, your heart will be set straight"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Freedom and Liberation Can Be Gained Only by Casting Off One's Corrupt Disposition). These words of God would help me be more pure and ready to accept God's scrutiny.

A while later, I was teaching Yang Fan a new skill. At first I was able to be patient with her, but when I saw she was a slow learner and made lots of mistakes, I started to get annoyed and to disdain and look down on her. I feared she would say I wasn't loving, so I reined in my temper and kept on teaching. I knew my temper was flaring up, but I didn't open up much about my true feelings in gatherings, because I worried if I said something then my sisters would think I was lacking in love and patience, and that would ruin my image. Plus, when I saw my sisters showing corruption or being negative and weak, I felt some disdain for them and didn't want to acknowledge them, even though I pretended to be caring and understanding. I'd never planned to share all that out of fear they'd say I was lacking in compassion and hard to get along with.

One day in November, a leader arranged for me to take on a duty somewhere else. My sisters said they were sad to see me go. Sister Li Zhi said how edifying and helpful my fellowship on the truth was for her, that I was fair with others and never looked down on people, and that those who understand and pursue the truth are welcome anywhere. Hearing such high praise from her made me kind of uneasy. I told her not to praise or worship others, that it wasn't good for them. Although Yang Fan wasn't directly praising me, I could hear in her voice that she saw me the same way as Li Zhi. I felt like I had a weight on my heart. I wondered whether I'd misled them and whether I had a problem. But looking at it another way, though I had corrupt disposition, I paid attention to reflecting on myself, and when I encountered problems, I sought the truth to solve them. Maybe I really was better than them, so that's why they thought highly of me. With that thought, I swept those concerns out of my mind and didn't think about it again.

Later, I saw a testimonial video, A Hypocrite's Repentance, where a sister talked about how she only shared positive experiences in her fellowship at gatherings, and how the others all really looked up to her. She was dismissed from her position, but when it came time to elect another person to take over, the brothers and sisters still voted unanimously for her to take charge, feeling like they couldn't do without her. They adored and looked up to her so much that some of them almost treated her like God. This really woke me up: It was a serious problem. I thought about how the others had been so admiring and complimentary of me lately and I thought I might be just like that sister, always talking about positive entry, and that I might need to reflect. Then I read a passage of God's words. Almighty God says: **"Antichrists are particularly adept at pretense when around other people. Just like the Pharisees, they appear on the outside to be very**

tolerant of people and patient, humble and good-natured—they seem so very lenient and tolerant with everyone. When handling problems, they always show how incredibly tolerant they are toward people from their position of status, and in every aspect they appear magnanimous and broad-minded, not being nitpicky with others, and showing people how great and kind they are. In reality, do antichrists actually possess these essences? They act for the good of others, are tolerant with people, and can help people in all situations, but what is their hidden motive for doing these things? Would they still do these things if they weren't trying to win people over and buy people's favor? Is this really how antichrists are behind closed doors? Are they really as they appear to be when around other people—humble and patient, tolerant of others, and helping others with love? Do they possess such an essence and such a disposition? Is this what their character is? Not at all. Everything they do is a pretense and is done to mislead people and buy people's favor so that even more people come to have a favorable impression of them in their hearts, and so that people think of them first and seek their help when they have a problem. In order to achieve this aim, antichrists deliberately scheme to show off around others, to say and do right things. Before they speak, who knows how many times they will filter or process their words in their minds. They will deliberately scheme and rack their brains, pondering over their wording, expressions, pitch, voice, and even over the look they give people and the tone they speak with. They will ponder over who it is they're talking to, whether that person is old or young, whether that person's status is higher or lower than their own, whether that person holds them in high esteem, whether that person privately resents them, whether that person's personality is compatible with their own, what



**duty that person does, and what their position in the church and in the hearts of their brothers and sisters is like. They will carefully observe and attentively ponder these things, and once they've pondered them, they come up with ways to approach all kinds of people. Regardless of the ways in which antichrists treat different kinds of people, their aim is nothing more than to get people to hold them in high esteem, to get people to no longer look at them as equals but rather to look up to them, to have even more people admire and look up to them when they speak, endorse and follow them when they do things, and absolve and defend them when they make a mistake, and to have even more people fight in their corner, complain bitterly on their behalf, and take a stand to argue with and oppose God when they are revealed and rejected. When they fall from power, they're able to have so many people assist, express support for, and stick up for them, which shows that the status and power that the antichrists have deliberately schemed to cultivate in the church have taken root deeply in people's hearts, and that their 'painstaking effort' has not been in vain"** (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Nine (Part Ten)).

Through God's revelation on antichrists, I learned that they put on an act of humility, patience and love to gain others' adoration and admiration, and this is how antichrists mislead them and buy their hearts. I was acting just like an antichrist. When I was training Yang Fan, even though I felt fed up, I still put on a patient face to gain the admiration of others. When I saw my sisters revealing corruption, on the inside I disdained them and didn't want to acknowledge them, but I still put on an act of caring and understanding, and never really opened up to any of them, fearing it would ruin their good image of me. I had blinded and deceived them so they would constantly praise and admire me. I could see that I was so deceitful.

I started thinking about why I couldn't stop putting on an act. What disposition was this? I read a passage of God's words: **"Deceitfulness can usually be seen on the outside: Someone beats around the bush or uses flowery language, and no one can read what they are thinking. That is deceitfulness. What is the primary characteristic of wickedness? It's that their words sound especially pleasing, and everything seems right on the surface. There doesn't appear to be any problem, and things look pretty good from every angle. When they do something, you don't see them using any particular means, and outwardly, there is no sign of weak points or flaws, yet they achieve their goal. They do things in an extremely secretive manner. This is how antichrists mislead people. People and matters like these are the most difficult to discern. Some people often say the right things, use good-sounding excuses, and employ certain doctrines, sayings, or actions that conform to human affection to pull the wool over people's eyes. They feign one thing while doing another in order to achieve their ulterior purpose. This is wickedness, but most people consider these behaviors to be deceitful. People have a relatively limited understanding and dissection of wickedness. Actually, wickedness is more difficult to discern than deceitfulness because it is more secretive, and its methods and actions are more sophisticated. If someone has a deceitful disposition within them, usually, others can detect their deceitfulness within two or three days of interacting with them, or they can perceive the revelation of their deceitful disposition in the person's actions and words. However, supposing that person is wicked: This isn't something that can be discerned within a few days, because without any significant events or special circumstances taking place in a short period of time, it isn't easy to discern anything from just listening to them talk. They always say**

**and do the right things, and present one right doctrine after another. After a few days of interacting with them, you might think this person is pretty good, is able to forsake things and expend themselves, has spiritual understanding, has a God-loving heart, and has both conscience and reason in the way they act. But after they handle a few matters, you see that their speech and actions are mixed up with too many things, too many devilish intentions. You realize that this person isn't honest but deceitful—a wicked thing. They frequently use the right words and pleasing phrases that align with the truth and possess human affection to interact with people. In one respect, they establish themselves, and in another, they mislead others, achieving prestige and status among people. Such individuals are incredibly misleading, and once they attain power and status, they can mislead and harm many people. People with wicked dispositions are highly dangerous”** (The Word,

Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Five: They Mislead, Draw In, Threaten, and Control People).

Having read God's words I understood that behind this masquerade, a wicked disposition was controlling me, which is harder to see than a deceitful one. People with wicked dispositions try to do things that appear good and seem in line with the truth to mislead people and win their hearts for their own ulterior motives, and people are unwittingly misled by this. That was exactly how I was. I knew that my brothers and sisters liked people that pursue the truth and are loving, that these people are esteemed and admired in the church, so I pretended to be that kind of person. I looked ready to suffer, to pay a price, to actively do my duty, and to be loving toward others, and I outwardly behaved like I acted in accordance with the truth. But my aim wasn't to practice the truth, it was to be admired by others and to capture their hearts. I was really wicked and despicable. If it were not for the judgment and revelation of God's words, I'd think that by

putting on a mask I was just being a little bit deceitful, not that I'd been dominated by a wicked disposition or that misleading people and capturing their hearts like that meant I was walking a path against God. We are God's creations and only God is worthy of worship, but I was so profoundly corrupted by Satan, and yet I always wanted to hold a high position among my brothers and sisters and to be admired and worshiped. Wasn't I acting just like the archangel? God's righteous disposition will not tolerate being offended by man, so if I didn't repent, I'd eventually end up damned and hated by God just like the Pharisees. This scared me. I knew that if I kept on like that the consequences would be very serious. I resolved to rebel against the flesh and be a simple, honest person.

After that, I worked to rebel against myself, and I started opening up to the others. One time, I hadn't taken enough care while making a video which meant there were a lot of problems with it and redoing it caused lots of delays in our work. When a sister told me I'd been irresponsible and couldn't be relied upon, I felt dissatisfied, resistant and wanted to argue back. A leader asked me about my state in a gathering later, and I thought: "If I really share everything, the brothers and sisters might think I can't accept the truth, that I just keep defending myself. Then what would everyone think of me? I'd better not speak up." Then I saw clearly that I was thinking about putting on an act again, so I prayed, and a passage of God's words came to mind. God says: **"Every time you finish doing something, even if you believe it was done correctly, it may not necessarily be in line with the truth. It must also be dissected, and must be compared, verified, and discerned according to God's words. This way, whether it was correct or mistaken will become clear. Moreover, the things you think you did wrong must also be dissected. This requires the brothers and sisters to spend more time together**

**fellowshipping, seeking, and helping each other out. The more you fellowship, the brighter your heart will be, and the more you will understand the truth principles. This is God's blessing. If none of you open your heart, and you all cover up yourselves, hoping to leave a good impression in the minds of others and wanting them to think highly of you and not scoff at you, then you will not experience true growth. If you always disguise yourself and never open up in fellowship, you won't receive the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit, and you won't be able to understand the truth. What will be the result then? You will live in darkness forever, and you will not be saved. If you want to gain the truth and change your disposition, you must pay a price to gain the truth and practice the truth, and you must open your heart and fellowship with others. This is beneficial to both your life entry and your dispositional change"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. The Most Fundamental Practice of Being an Honest Person). The words of God gave me a path of practice. I should accept God's scrutiny, and no matter what other people thought of me, I had to open up and practice the truth. This was the only way my problem could be resolved. At that point I mustered up my courage to open up to everyone about my state and reveal my corruption. I felt much freer after doing that, and fellowshipping with the others helped me understand my problem.

The facts that were revealed during that time showed me I had a deceitful, wicked disposition. I was always pretending in order to be admired and adored by others. Without the judgment and revelation of God's words, I would not have been able to know myself at all and I would not have been able to change. I also understand now how important our motives are in doing things, and that being able to accept God's scrutiny

and rectify our motives in our duties, and to open up and be honest is the only way to gain God's approval and bring Him joy.

# 61. The Consequences of Being a People Pleaser

By Bai Hua, China

I was a people pleaser before. Whenever I'd see one of the brothers or sisters revealing corruption or doing their duty in a perfunctory manner, I wouldn't dare to point it out to them, in fear of damaging their reputation and leaving them with a bad impression of me. In interacting with the brothers and sisters I went by the satanic philosophy of "Think before you speak and then talk with reservation," and when I actually did point things out to people to help them, I'd just slip in a casual word or two that underplayed the situation. Sometimes, when I heard the brothers and sisters describe me as amicable, my heart would soar. I'd believe that they liked me, and that therefore, God must also like me. It was only when I was pruned, and when I failed and stumbled, that I was able to gain some understanding of myself, and see clearly the nature, harm, and consequences of being a people pleaser.

I was elected as a church leader in 2018. I knew that one of the most critical parts of serving as a leader was fellowshipping on the truth, resolving others' difficulties with their life entry, and protecting the church life. But I was afraid of offending anyone, so whenever I discovered a problem, I'd always adopt the tactic of offering kind, gentle advice in handling it. During that time, I noticed the watering deacon, Brother Liu Liang, was being perfunctory, didn't take on a burden in his duty and that when newcomers encountered problems he didn't fellowship with them to find a resolution promptly, leaving some of them negative and weak. I was aware of how serious the nature of this problem was, and that I should fellowship with him and dissect how he was being perfunctory in his duty. If he kept on that way without repenting, it would definitely disgust God.

But the moment I saw Liu Liang, I just beat a retreat. I thought, “He really values his reputation, so if I point these issues out to him and really hurt his feelings, he certainly won’t think so well of me. If he refuses to accept it, and develops some kind of animosity or estrangement toward me, aside from how embarrassing that will be for me, it will be hard to get along after that. If the brothers and sisters think that I am starting to scold and reprimand people now that I am leader, will they still have a good impression of me? Forget it, I won’t fellowship with him or dissect his problem.” So, I just gently advised him, downplaying the issue, “We need to put more heart into our duties, take on a burden....” As a result, Liu Liang didn’t see the essence of his perfunctory approach to his duty, and continued on the same irresponsible way as always. Seeing this was unsettling for me. As a church leader, I was watching a brother muddle through his duty and impact the church’s work, but I wasn’t resolving it through fellowship on the truth. How was that doing real work? This was a serious dereliction of duty. I felt worse the more I thought about it, but I still couldn’t open my mouth to expose him. I was concerned that if I exposed and pruned him, he might think I lacked compassion, and if he became negative, threw in the towel and quit his duty, the other brothers and sisters might think I was incapable of work. Not only would that compromise our general rapport, but it would also damage my reputation. I thought, “Forget it, I’ve already said something to Liu Liang anyway, so I’ll let him reflect on it over time.” In this way, I never ended up exposing or dissecting his problem.

Later, I noticed that two other brothers who worked with me were always at odds because they had different ideas about things. Neither of them would give ground and their work discussions were never productive. Sometimes after they had stopped arguing, they’d become estranged, which



impacted the church's work. I was aware of how serious the issue was and I thought I shouldn't waste any time in revealing the manifestations, nature, and consequences of their arrogance, self-righteousness, and stubbornness. But again, I turned tail as soon as I saw them. I figured, "They have both been leaders for years, so they should know about this problem without me mentioning it. Plus, they are both really nice to me, so if I fellowship on the nature and grave consequences of their problem, they might think I am just finding fault with them. Then it would be hard to get along with them. Forget it. They often read God's words anyway, so they can give it some thought with time." So, I just gave them a couple words of advice when I saw them fighting again, urging them to calm down without directly exposing them at all.

One day, a sister said to me, "Our church work isn't going very well. There are obvious problems in some brothers' and sisters' duties and you guys aren't fellowshipping to resolve these things. Doesn't this lack of doing real work make you false leaders?" It was really upsetting to hear that from her. It was obvious to me that there were problems with some brothers and sisters that I was keeping quiet on. I wasn't fulfilling a leader's responsibilities at all. Wasn't I being a false leader? I knew that if I kept failing to practice the truth, God would spurn me and eliminate me. The prospect of this frightened me, and I said a prayer: "God, I've seen some brothers and sisters living in their corrupt dispositions, and our church life and various aspects of church work are seriously impacted, but I can't put the truth into practice to fix this. God, please guide me to know myself."

I read this in God's words after my prayer: **"Practicing the truth is not about saying empty words or shouting slogans. Rather it is about how, no matter what people encounter in life, as long as it involves the principles of human conduct, their perspectives on things, or the**

**matter of performing their duties, they are faced with making a choice, and they should seek the truth, search for a basis and principles in God's words, and then find a path of practice. Those who can practice in this way are people who pursue the truth. To be able to pursue the truth in this way no matter how great the difficulties one encounters is to walk the path of Peter, the path of pursuing the truth. For example: What principle should be followed when it comes to interacting with others? Perhaps your original viewpoint is that 'Harmony is a treasure; forbearance is brilliance,' and that you should keep on everyone's good side, avoid causing others to lose face, and offend no one, thereby achieving good relations with others. Constricted by this viewpoint, you keep silent when you witness others doing bad things or violating the principles. You would rather that the work of the church suffers losses than offend anyone. You seek to stay on everyone's good side, no matter who they are. You think only about human sentiments and saving face when you speak, and you always speak nice-sounding words to please others. Even if you discover that someone has problems, you choose to tolerate them, and just talk about them behind their back, but to their face you keep the peace and maintain your relationship. What do you think of such conduct? Is it not that of a people pleaser? Is it not pretty slippery? It violates the principles of human conduct. Is it not lowly to conduct yourself in such a manner? Those who act like this are not good people, this is not a noble way to conduct oneself. No matter how much you have suffered, and no matter how many prices you have paid, if you conduct yourself without principles, then you have failed in this respect, and your conduct will not be recognized, remembered, or accepted before God'' (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. To Perform One's Duty Well, One Must at Least Be Possessed of a Conscience and Reason). Reading**

God's words exposing people pleasers was really troubling for me. I wasn't resolving problems in the church not because I didn't see them clearly, but because I didn't want to offend anyone, and I was afraid they'd see me poorly. I was trying to protect my own image and status. God detests people like me who don't act on principle or practice the truth, who are selfish and deceitful. I thought back on how I'd been behaving. I had seen that Liu Liang was always perfunctory in his duty and was holding up our watering work, so I should have exposed and dissected the nature of his behavior. But I was afraid of everyone seeing me in a bad light, that they would say I was scolding and finding fault with people now that I was a leader, so I never dissected the nature of Liu Liang's problem to protect my image. I just said something that touched lightly on the problem without doing anything to help. And even when I saw those two brothers who could never get along, and the serious impact it had on our church work, I never exposed or dissected the matter to help them understand themselves. The church's work suffered as a result. I lived by satanic philosophies such as "Harmony is a treasure; forbearance is brilliance," "Keeping silent on the faults of good friends makes for a long and good friendship," and "One more friend means one more path." Wanting to protect my reputation and status and be seen as a nice guy by everyone, I saw things clearly but didn't fully share what I thought. This not only harmed other brothers and sisters, but also delayed the church's work. I saw I was totally lacking in conscience and reason and didn't have the slightest devotion to God. How was that being a good person? Even if I got along well with everyone on the surface and the others all said I was a good person and had a good impression of me, before God, I wasn't fulfilling any duty. In God's eyes, I was an unfaithful, untrustworthy person. I was disgusting God. Realizing

this, I quickly repented to God. I knew I couldn't continue on like that, and that I had to seek the truth to resolve this problem of mine.

I read this in God's words after that: **“What is the consequence of their pursuit of fame, gain, and status? First, this affects how God's chosen people eat and drink God's word normally and understand the truth, it hinders their life entry, stops them from entering the right track of faith in God, and leads them onto the wrong path—which harms the chosen ones, and brings them to ruin. And what does it ultimately do to the work of the church? It is disturbance, impairment, and dismantlement. This is the consequence brought about by people's pursuit of fame, gain, and status. When they do their duty in this way, can this not be defined as walking the path of an antichrist? When God asks that people put aside fame, gain, and status, it is not that He is depriving people of the right to choose; rather, it is because, while pursuing fame, gain, and status, people disrupt and disturb the work of the church and the life entry of God's chosen people, and can even have an influence on more people's eating and drinking God's words, understanding the truth, and thus achieving God's salvation. This is an indisputable fact. When people pursue their own fame, gain, and status, it is certain that they will not pursue the truth and that they will not faithfully fulfill their duty. They will only speak and act for the sake of fame, gain, and status, and all the work they do, without the least exception, is for those things' sake. To behave and act in such a way is, without question, to walk the path of antichrists; it is a disruption and disturbance of God's work, and all its various consequences are hindering the spread of the kingdom gospel and the carrying out of God's will within the church. So, one may say with certainty that the path walked by those who pursue fame, gain, and status is the path of**

**resistance against God. It is intentional resistance against Him, naysaying Him—it is to cooperate with Satan in resisting God and standing in opposition to Him. This is the nature of people’s pursuit of fame, gain, and status. The problem with people pursuing their own interests is that the goals they pursue are the goals of Satan—they are goals that are wicked and unjust. When people pursue personal interests such as fame, gain, and status, they unwittingly become a tool of Satan, they become an outlet for Satan, and, moreover, they become an embodiment of Satan. They play a negative role in the church; toward the work of the church, and toward the normal church life and normal pursuit of God’s chosen people, the effect they have is to disturb and impair; they have an adverse and negative effect”** (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Nine (Part One)). I saw in God’s word that the nature and consequences of being a people pleaser who safeguards their own interests and doesn’t practice the truth are disrupting and sabotaging the work of God’s house and being a minion of Satan. If I stayed that way without repenting, I would be spurned and eliminated by God. As a church leader, my responsibility is to fellowship on the truth to resolve the brothers’ and sisters’ problems and difficulties in their life entry, and to look after church life. But instead, when I saw people’s problems, I wasn’t helping them change, exposing and dissecting the essence of their behavior, rather, I was being a people pleaser to protect my own status and reputation, acting as Satan’s lackey, bringing harm upon the work of the church and the lives of the brothers and sisters. I was firmly under the control of my corrupt disposition, too cowardly to practice the truth and uphold justice. I was Satan’s lackey, feeble and incompetent, living so despicably, so pathetically. If I didn’t start practicing the truth and rebel against myself, I was truly unworthy of living before God! Without the judgment and

exposure of His words, I'd have never been aware of my own corruption or known the dangers and consequences of being a people pleaser and not practicing the truth. I was willing to rebel against myself and to stop being a people pleaser.

I read a couple passages of God's word later that gave me some paths of practice. God's words say: **"In essence, God is faithful, and so His words can always be trusted; His actions, furthermore, are faultless and unquestionable, which is why God likes those who are absolutely honest with Him"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Three Admonitions). **"If you have the motivations and perspective of a people pleaser, then, in all matters, you will be incapable of practicing the truth and abiding by principle, and you will always fail and fall down. If you do not awaken and do not ever seek the truth, then you are a disbeliever, and you will never gain the truth and life. What, then, should you do? When faced with such things, you must pray to God and call out to Him, begging for salvation and asking that He give you more faith and strength and enable you to abide by the principles, do what you should do, handle things according to the principles, stand firm in the position you should stand in, protect the interests of God's house, and prevent any harm from coming to the work of God's house. If you are able to rebel against your self-interests, your pride, and your standpoint of a people pleaser, and if you do what you should do with an honest, undivided heart, then you will have defeated Satan and gained this aspect of the truth. If you always persist in living by the philosophy of Satan, protecting your relationships with others, never practicing the truth, and not daring to abide by the principles, then will you be able to practice the truth in other matters? You will still have no faith or strength. If you are never able to seek or accept the truth, then**

**will such faith in God allow you to obtain the truth? (No.) And if you cannot obtain the truth, can you be saved? You cannot. If you always live by the philosophy of Satan, utterly devoid of the truth reality, then you can never be saved. It should be clear to you that obtaining the truth is a necessary condition for salvation. How, then, can you obtain the truth? If you are able to practice the truth, if you can live by the truth, and the truth becomes the basis of your life, then you will gain the truth and have life, and so you will be one of those who are saved”**

(The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Part Three). By reading this, I saw that God likes honest people. Honest people aren't focused on protecting their relationships with others, and they don't care how they're seen, but God has a place in their hearts. They uphold principles in all things, have a sense of justice, and are faithful to God. But thinking again about myself, I saw that I cared too much about my interpersonal relationships, reputation, and status. When things happened that required protecting the interests of the church and practicing the truth, I consistently took Satan's side, not daring to uphold the truth principles; I always rebelled against and resisted God, hurting and disappointing Him. In fact, telling the truth and pointing out someone's problem isn't to embarrass them. Doing that is really beneficial, whether it's about a brother or sister, or regarding the church's work. If I notice someone revealing corruption but don't call attention to the nature or consequences of this type of action, they'll never realize how serious their problem is, and they will not be able to change. This not only hinders their life entry, but it also impacts the church's work, and it's disgusting to God because I'm living within a corrupt disposition and not protecting the work of the church. I always was so preoccupied with my reputation and status, always concerned with others' opinions without prioritizing God's. I wasn't considering how to act

in line with the truth. I was always constrained by my corrupt disposition—I was such a fool. I couldn't keep letting my corrupt disposition take the lead and I didn't want to be a spineless laughingstock of Satan. I had to be an honest person with a sense of justice who pleased God. Understanding this, I gained the resolve to practice the truth and rebel against the flesh. I would uphold the principles and stand on God's side in protecting the work of the church, regardless of how others saw me. I sought out the two brothers the next day and just as I was getting ready to point out their problem, I started to feel a little worried, thinking, "What if they can't accept being exposed and pruned and take it out on me? How can I show my face then?" I realized I was being constrained by my corrupt disposition, so I said a prayer, asking God to help me practice the truth. Then I remembered something God said: **"Being unable to uphold My testimonies and interests is betrayal. Offering false smiles when far from Me in heart is betrayal"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. A Very Serious Problem: Betrayal (1)). From God's words I understood that if I kept being a people pleaser and not practicing the truth or protecting the interests of the church, then I was betraying God. I knew I had to stop protecting interpersonal relationships, and no matter what they thought of me after I spoke up about their problem, I had to face God and practice the truth. And so, I exposed their arrogance and uncooperative behavior, and the essence and consequences of these things. I also found some words of God to read to them. After listening, they were able to reflect and know themselves in light of God's words and wanted to repent and change. I was so happy to see that they were able to know themselves, but I also felt kind of guilty. If I had been able to practice the truth and help them know how serious their problem was earlier, they could have turned things around sooner. They wouldn't have kept living in corruption, being harmed and toyed with by



Satan, and they especially wouldn't have held up the church's work. I always used to be afraid that if I pointed out others' problems, they'd be annoyed and they would then have something against me. But in fact, that was all in my head. As long as someone can accept the truth, they won't develop any prejudices, but they will be able to learn a lesson. This way of practicing is beneficial for others and for myself.

I had more confidence in practicing the truth and being an honest person after that. I wasn't as constrained by thoughts of status and reputation. When I saw my brothers' and sisters' problems, I could share fellowship and help them right away, exposing and dissecting their issues. I really felt God's love and salvation through these experiences. It was the judgment and exposure of God's word that changed my people-pleasing mentality. I felt that practicing the truth was so relaxing and gave real peace of mind, so much better than always bending over backward, afraid of causing offense. I was also able to live with a bit of a human likeness. I saw that only God's words are the truth, and they can give us a direction and a path for what we do and who we are. Living as an honest person according to God's words is the only way to be a good person.

## 62. How I Reported an Antichrist

By Wen Jing, China

A few years ago, I came back from out of town to my local church to do my duty. When I heard the leader, Zhang Xin, say Xiao Liu was the watering deacon, I was stunned. I knew Xiao Liu used to sow discord, as well as suppress and punish people. To gain power in the church, she and a few evil people claimed the leaders and workers to be false, causing chaos. At that time, the brothers and sisters identified her as an evil person based on her behavior and were preparing the materials to expel her. Why was she now the watering deacon? I asked Zhang Xin, who said Xiao Liu had changed now and bore a burden in her duty, and that I should view her lovingly from a perspective of growth. Although I had my doubts, I had just come back, so I didn't know what was going on, and I thought that as a leader, Zhang Xin wouldn't go against principles in choosing people, so I didn't ask more. Zhang Xin also mentioned that Sister Fang Ling, who had been her partner as leader before, hadn't done a duty or attended gatherings since being dismissed and hadn't reversed course after repeated fellowshipping. Therefore, she was to be cleared out, and Zhang Xin asked me to provide examples of Fang Ling's evildoings. This made me a little suspicious. Fang Ling merely hadn't borne a burden in her duty and was a false leader who didn't do real work. But after being dismissed, she still preached the gospel, attended to general affairs, and did no evil. Why did she have to be cleared out? The more I thought about it, the more wrong it felt. I recalled that when I had contact with Zhang Xin in the past, she'd been quite vindictive. Fang Ling once reported to upper-level leaders that Zhang Xin didn't bear a burden in her duty. Could it be that she held a grudge over this incident and wanted revenge on Fang Ling? If that was the

case, Zhang Xin was punishing Fang Ling, and that was doing evil! But I also realized I didn't know about Fang Ling's recent behavior, so I couldn't be certain that there was something wrong with Zhang Xin. I decided to wait until I knew for sure.

Later, I heard that Zhang Xin had distorted the facts and judged Fang Ling during a gathering, and when a sister refuted her, she condemned that sister and Fang Ling for ganging up together to attack leadership and arranged for that sister to reflect in isolation. Because another sister said Fang Ling treated others lovingly, Zhang Xin then lied, saying that sister's safety was at risk, and stopped her from attending gatherings for three months. There was also a sister in charge of general affairs, who Zhang Xin stopped from doing her duty merely because she gave Zhang Xin advice. This really shocked me. How could Zhang Xin have no God-fearing heart at all? She did so many evil things to suppress people. And those she suppressed were the people in the church who pursued the truth. There was certainly a problem with Zhang Xin. I went to Sister Li Xinrui, who watered newcomers, to fellowship and discern the issue. She told me, "Xiao Liu shows no repentance at all. She still cries out about the injustices she's suffered and keeps arguing about who was wrong and who was right at every gathering she attends, causing disruption to church life. When Fang Ling was the leader, she looked into Xiao Liu's evil behavior, so Xiao Liu has brazenly said that she wants revenge on her." I was outraged. Zhang Xin actually said that Xiao Liu had repented. She was clearly condoning an evil person who was disturbing the church. Wasn't this a sign of a false leader? But I thought about how if Zhang Xin didn't promptly reverse course, she would delay the church's work, so I decided to point out these issues to her first. After meeting Zhang Xin, I told her that she violated principles by stopping those sisters from doing their duties. Unexpectedly,

she actually yelled at me, “Some people refuse to obey me, and speak ill of me behind my back! I know exactly who has these opinions about me. If they won’t obey me, go report it to upper-level leaders! Everything I do is just and right. I’m not afraid of what anyone has to say about me.” Her vicious response frightened me. Now, she alone had the final say in the church, and she suppressed and punished whoever didn’t listen to her. She was nothing but a tyrant. I’d only said one thing to her, and she was so vicious that I feared if I continued to point things out and expose her, she would forbid me from doing my duty. My life entry would suffer if that happened. Once I thought of that, I stopped pointing out her problems. After I got home, I felt very guilty. An evil person was disturbing the church, and my brothers and sisters were being suppressed. Instead of handling the matter, Zhang Xin was suppressing people, and when I pointed out her problem, she didn’t accept it. I knew I should report this situation to the upper-level leaders. After that, I went to see Xinrui. We discussed the principles of writing a report letter and prepared to report Zhang Xin. But when we finished writing out her evil behaviors and prepared to hand it in, I hesitated. What would we do if Zhang Xin found out about our report letter, made up a charge, framed us, and had us expelled? How could I be saved if I had been expelled? After thinking about this, I didn’t hand in the letter for a long time. But as I watched the chaos in the church, I felt guilty about not reporting it. Over those few days, whenever I thought about this matter, I’d feel really upset.

One night, when I went to Xinrui’s house, Zhang Xin suddenly came over, and aggressively accused Xinrui of exposing her at the church. Seeing her vicious attitude, I felt very indignant. She really was too conceited. She recklessly committed misdeeds, but forbade others from exposing her. People didn’t even have the right to speak, and the whole church was under

her control. I had to stand up for justice and expose Zhang Xin to protect the work of the church. But considering how arrogant she was, how she didn't listen to anyone and was so vindictive, I thought that if I provoked her, I might be the next one she punished. She might invent some charge to have me expelled. I felt very conflicted, so I silently called on God to give me courage and confidence. I thought of God's word: **"Every church has people who cause disturbance for the church or disrupt the work of God. They are all Satans who have infiltrated the house of God in disguise. ... These people rampage through the church, spreading their negativity, venting death, doing as they please, saying what they please, and no one dares to stop them. They brim with the disposition of Satan. No sooner do they cause a disturbance than an air of death enters the church. Those within the church who practice the truth are spurned, unable to give their all, while those who disturb the church and spread death run rampage within—and, what's more, most people follow them. Such churches are ruled by Satan, plain and simple; the devil is their king. If people in such churches do not rise up and reject the head demons, then they, too, will sooner or later come to ruin. From now on, measures must be taken against such churches. If those who are capable of practicing a little of the truth do not seek to, then that church will be expunged. If a church contains no one who is willing to practice the truth and no one who can stand firm in their testimony to God, then that church should be completely isolated, and its connections with other churches must be severed. This is called 'burying death'; this is what it means to spurn Satan"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. A Warning to Those Who Do Not Practice the Truth). God's word gave me courage and strength, and I was no longer afraid. God's righteous disposition doesn't tolerate offense, and for those extremely evil people and

antichrists, God has the utmost hatred and disgust. Even if they hold power and run rampant for a while, in the end they will be revealed and eliminated. God's word is very clear; when evil people and antichrists control the church, if no one practices the truth, then they are condoning these evil forces running rampant in the church. Such a church is ruled by Satan, and if the members don't repent, they will all be forsaken and eliminated by God. I was really struck by this. Zhang Xin was a tyrant in the church, attacking and punishing my brothers and sisters, yet to protect myself, I didn't stand up to expose and stop her, letting her and Xiao Liu do evil and disturb the church's work. I was standing on Satan's side and resisting God, and I had a share in their evil. Realizing this, I found the courage to expose Zhang Xin for protecting an evil person, using her position to punish others, and taking the path of the antichrist. After she heard this, Zhang Xin was speechless. She changed the subject immediately, agreed to let Fang Ling back into the church, and then she left.

After that, a couple passages of God's word gave me some clarity, and I could understand Zhang Xin's essence more. God's words say: **“One of the most obvious characteristics of the essence of an antichrist is that they monopolize power and run their own dictatorships: They do not listen to anyone, they do not respect anyone, and regardless of people's strengths, or what correct views or wise opinions they may express, or what suitable methods they might put forward, they pay them no heed; it is as if no one is qualified to cooperate with them, or to take part in anything they do. This is the kind of disposition antichrists have. Some people say this is being of bad humanity—but how could it be commonplace bad humanity? This is an entirely satanic disposition, and such a disposition is supremely vicious. Why do I say that their disposition is supremely vicious? Antichrists expropriate everything**

from the house of God and the property of the church, and treat them as their personal property, all of which is to be managed by them, and they do not permit anyone else to intervene in this. The only things they think about when doing the work of the church are their own interests, their own status, and their own pride. They do not allow anyone to harm their interests, much less do they allow anyone of caliber or anyone who is able to speak of their experiential testimony to threaten their reputation and status. And so, they try to suppress and exclude as competitors those who are able to speak of experiential testimony, and who can fellowship the truth and provide for God's chosen people, and they desperately try to isolate those people completely from everyone else, to drag their names thoroughly through the mud, and to bring them down. Only then will the antichrists feel at peace. ... Do they consider the interests of the house of God? No. What do they think about? They think only of how to hold on to their own status. Though antichrists know themselves to be incapable of doing real work, they do not cultivate or promote people of good caliber who pursue the truth; the only people they promote are those who flatter them, those who are apt to worship others, who approve of and admire them in their hearts, those who are smooth operators, who have no understanding of the truth and are incapable of discernment. The antichrists bring these people up to their side to serve them, to run about for them, and to spend each day orbiting around them. This gives the antichrists power in the church, and it means that many people draw close to them, and follow them, and that no one dares to offend them. All these people whom antichrists cultivate are people who do not pursue the truth. Most of them lack spiritual understanding and know nothing but rule-following. They like to follow trends and the powers that be. They are

**of the sort that is emboldened by having a powerful master—a gang of muddle-headed people. How does that saying of the nonbelievers go? Better to be a squire to a good man than the worshiped forebear of a bad one. Antichrists do precisely the opposite—they act as the worshiped forebears of such people, and set out to cultivate them as their flag-wavers and cheerers-on. Whenever an antichrist is in power in a church, they will always recruit muddle-headed people and those who blindly fool around as their helpers, while excluding and suppressing those people of caliber who can understand and practice the truth, who can take on work—and especially those leaders and workers who are capable of actual work”** (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists.

Item Eight: They Would Have Others Submit Only to Them, Not the Truth or God (Part One)).

**“Who are the people an antichrist views as dissenters? At a minimum, they are those who do not take the antichrist seriously as a leader, meaning that they do not look up to them or worship them but treat them as an ordinary person. That is one sort. Then there are those who love the truth, pursue the truth, pursue a change in their disposition, and pursue the love for God; they take a different road from that of an antichrist, and they are dissenters in the antichrist’s eyes. Are there any others? (Those who always make suggestions to antichrists, and who dare to expose them.) Any who dare offer an antichrist their suggestions and expose them, or whose views are different from theirs, are seen by them as dissenters. And there is another sort: those who equal the antichrist in caliber and ability, whose capacity for speech and action is similar to theirs, or whom they see as above them and able to discern them. To an antichrist, this is beyond the pale, a threat to their status. Such people are the antichrist’s greatest dissenters. The antichrist does not dare neglect such people or slacken in the least. They consider them as**



thorns in their side, a constant irritation, are vigilant and guarded against them at all times, and avoid them in everything they do. Especially when the antichrist sees that a dissenter is going to discern and expose them, a special panic grips them; they are desperate to exclude and attack such a dissenter, such that they will not be satisfied until they have cleared that dissenter out of the church. With such a mindset and a heart filled with these things, what sort of things are they capable of? Would they treat these brothers and sisters as enemies, and think of ways to bring them down and get rid of them? They certainly would. They would rack their brains thinking of ways to bring dissenters to heel and go to any lengths to defeat them, wouldn't they? Bringing dissenters to heel means that the antichrist makes everyone listen to them, making it so no one will dare to say anything else or hold different opinions, let alone expose them. Defeating a dissenter means that the antichrist frames and condemns them, creating some false impressions so that the dissenter is made a fool of and gets pruned, causing their reputation to hit rock bottom. Is doing something like this not the greatest form of evil deed? Does it not offend God's disposition?" (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Two: They Attack and Exclude Dissenters). The nature of antichrists is especially sinister and vicious. To monopolize power and create an independent kingdom, they promote the people they like to be their right-hand men, and if anyone points out their deficiencies, exposes them, or threatens their status, they regard them as a thorn in their side, attack and exclude them by any means they can, and even clear them out from the church. The essence of antichrists is that of evil people. They are averse to the truth and have no conscience or reason, and no matter how much they punish others, they feel no guilt. Looking at Zhang Xin's behavior, as a leader, she didn't uphold the

work of the church at all, and she used her power to cultivate her followers to control the church and attack and exclude dissenters. Xiao Liu was an evil person and needed to be expelled, but because she defended Zhang Xin, Zhang Xin promoted her and found various reasons to absolve her of her guilt. Fang Ling had a sense of justice, and when she pointed out Zhang Xin's problems, Zhang Xin held a grudge. When Fang Ling was dismissed, Zhang Xin saw a chance to take revenge, so she did everything possible to clear out Fang Ling from the church. When several other sisters didn't follow her in condemning Fang Ling, she suppressed and punished them. Zhang Xin was sinister and vicious, she punished anyone who threatened her status or didn't obey her, and she was a tyrant running amok in the church who felt no remorse at all. She was a true antichrist. After we had identified this in Zhang Xin, we handed in the report letter.

It didn't take long for Zhang Xin to take revenge on us. She stopped me from coming to gatherings, using the excuse that I was a safety hazard. Because Sisters Li Xinrui and Yuan Siyu had identified Zhang Xin for what she really was, she also stopped them from going to gatherings. So we agreed to hold gatherings together. Some time after that, Zhang Xin framed me and Xinrui for contending for leadership, causing chaos in the church, and being evil people, and asked the brothers and sisters to reject us. Some believed Zhang Xin's words without discernment and would coldly ignore me when they saw me in the street. When this happened, I felt hurt and wronged. Why, after practicing the truth, were we being suppressed, punished, and framed by these forces of evil? Why was Zhang Xin still prospering in the church despite doing evil? Why did our brothers and sisters misunderstand and reject us? I was in so much pain, I didn't know how I would walk my path in the future, and I was trapped in negativity. At the gatherings over those days, when the sisters discerned Zhang Xin's

behavior, I didn't want to speak. I thought, "I stood up to expose Zhang Xin, and not only have I been suppressed, I've been misunderstood by my brothers and sisters as vying for leadership. Now I've been suppressed and isolated. Who will speak up for me? Well forget it then, those church affairs are none of my business." I was feeling very weak, and I was in deep spiritual darkness. In my torment, I knelt before God with tears in my eyes and told Him over and over, "God! I am suffering so much after experiencing these things. Why am I being suppressed and rejected for practicing the truth to protect the interests of the church? God, please guide me, help me understand Your intention."

Later, I read in God's word: **"When confronting real-life problems, how should you know and understand God's authority and His sovereignty? When you are faced with these problems and do not know how to understand, handle, and experience them, what attitude should you adopt to demonstrate your intention to submit, your desire to submit, and the reality of your submission to God's sovereignty and arrangements? First you must learn to wait; then you must learn to seek; then you must learn to submit. 'Waiting' means waiting for the time of God, awaiting the people, events, and things that He has arranged for you, waiting for His intentions to be gradually revealed to you. 'Seeking' means observing and understanding God's thoughtful intentions for you through the people, events, and things that He has laid out, understanding the truth through them, understanding what humans must accomplish and the ways they must adhere to, understanding what results God means to achieve in humans and what accomplishments He means to attain in them. 'Submitting,' of course, refers to accepting the people, events, and things that God has orchestrated, accepting His sovereignty and, through it, coming to**

**know how the Creator dictates man's fate, how He supplies man with His life, how He works the truth within man"** (The Word, Vol. 2. On Knowing God. God Himself, the Unique III). After contemplating God's word, I suddenly understood, when things happen that I don't understand, I should have an attitude of submission, learn to seek God's intentions, and wait for things to proceed on God's time. I realized that after we submitted the report letter, there was a process for the upper-level leaders to handle it. Before they could deal with it, Zhang Xin would definitely continue to do evil, attack and exclude dissenters, this was her evil nature revealing itself. During this period, we had to be patient and wait. This was a necessary part of the process. But I didn't have the heart to submit and wait, and I didn't seek to learn lessons in this environment. When I saw that Zhang Xin hadn't been handled, and that I was instead condemned and rejected, I complained and misunderstood God, denied His righteousness, and felt disappointed by Him. I was so unreasonable!

After that, I prayed to God and asked Him to guide me in understanding His righteous disposition. Then, I read this passage of God's word: **"How do people know and grasp God's righteous disposition? The righteous receive His blessings and the evil are cursed by Him. This is God's righteousness. God rewards good and punishes evil, and He recompenses every man according to their deeds. This is correct, but there are at present some events that do not accord with man's notions, namely, that there are some who believe in God and worship Him who are killed or meet with His curses, or who God has never blessed or paid attention to; no matter how much they worship Him, He ignores them. There are some evil people who God neither blesses nor punishes, yet they are rich and have many offspring, and all goes well for them; they are successful in everything. Is this God's**

righteousness? Some people say, ‘We worship God, yet haven’t gotten blessings from Him, while evil people who don’t worship God and even resist Him are living better and more prosperously than we do. God isn’t righteous!’ What does this show you? I just gave you two examples. Which one speaks to God’s righteousness? Some people say, ‘They are both manifestations of God’s righteousness!’ Why do they say this? There are principles to God’s actions—it is just that people cannot see them clearly, and being unable to see them clearly, they cannot say that God is not righteous. Man can only see what is on the surface; they cannot see through to things as they are. Therefore, what God does is righteous, however little it accords with man’s notions and imaginings. There are many people who constantly complain that God is not righteous. This is because they do not understand the situation for what it is. It is easy for them to make mistakes when they are always looking at things in light of their notions and imaginings. People’s knowledge exists among their own thoughts and viewpoints, within their ideas of transactions, or within their perspectives on good and evil, on right and wrong, or on logic. When someone sees things from such perspectives, it is easy for them to misunderstand God and to give rise to notions, and that person will resist Him and complain about Him” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Part Three).

“What would you say—is God’s destruction of Satan an expression of His righteousness? (Yes.) What if He allowed Satan to remain? You dare not say, yes? God’s essence is righteousness. Though it is not easy to comprehend what He does, all that He does is righteous; it is simply that people do not understand. When God gave Peter to Satan, how did Peter respond? ‘Mankind is unable to fathom what You do, but all of what You do contains Your good will; there is righteousness in all of it.

**How can I not utter praise for Your wisdom and deeds?’ You should now see that the reason God does not destroy Satan in the time of His salvation of man is that humans may see clearly how Satan has corrupted them and the extent to which it has corrupted them, and how God purifies and saves them. Ultimately, when people have understood the truth and clearly seen Satan’s odious countenance, and beheld the monstrous sin of Satan’s corruption of them, God will destroy Satan, showing them His righteousness. The timing when God destroys Satan is filled with God’s disposition and wisdom. Everything that God does is righteous. Though humans may not be able to perceive God’s righteousness, they should not make judgments at will. If something He does appears to humans as unreasonable, or if they have any notions about it, and that leads them to say that He is not righteous, then they are being most unreasonable. You see that Peter found some things to be incomprehensible, but he was sure that God’s wisdom was present and that His good will was in those things. Humans cannot fathom everything; there are so many things that they cannot grasp”** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Part Three). As I contemplated God’s word, I realized that I held the notion that righteousness means fairness and reasonableness. An evil person and an antichrist disrupted the work of the church, and since we safeguarded church interests by standing up to expose and report it, God should have watched over us, protected us, and not let us be oppressed, and the evil person and antichrist should have been expelled immediately. I thought this was God’s righteousness. After we wrote the report letter and I saw that the antichrist and evil person hadn’t been dealt with, still held high positions in the church, and had isolated and condemned us, I began to have doubts about God’s righteousness, and even unreasonably asked where God’s righteousness was. I was so arrogant! I

thought of how, when Peter was tested, he underwent painful refinement. Although he couldn't fathom what God was doing, he believed that God was righteous no matter what He did, and that there was God's wisdom in it. This is why he could submit to God, and in the end, he had the utmost love for God, submitted to Him unto death, and produced beautiful testimony. But I didn't understand the truth and measured God's righteousness from a transactional point of view based merely on what little I could see in front of me. When God did things that accorded with my notions, that benefited me, I thought God was righteous, and I could praise God. When I was suppressed by an antichrist, and my future and destiny were involved, I lost faith in God, and even doubted that God was righteous and denied that the church was ruled by truth and righteousness. I evaluated God's righteousness entirely based on whether I benefited from His actions. It was utterly absurd. God is the Creator, God's essence is righteousness, and God hates evil, that is determined by His essence. Although the church hadn't expelled the antichrist and evil person for the time being, that certainly didn't mean God wasn't disgusted by their actions, it didn't mean God didn't despise evil, and it didn't mean the church wasn't ruled by truth. There was God's wisdom and good intentions in this, I just didn't understand it. I had to be reasonable, assume my place as a created being, submit to God's sovereignty and arrangements, pray to God and seek, and wait for His enlightenment and guidance. Once I realized this, my heart brightened, and my misunderstandings of God vanished. I also realized that some brothers and sisters in the church still hadn't seen Zhang Xin for what she was. Through these things, little by little, they would all come to see Zhang Xin's essence. Everyone had to see her for what she was before they could reject her. This would really help us to develop our discernment.

After understanding this, I prayed to God to say I wanted to submit to His orchestrations and arrangements, and learn lessons in this environment.

Later, in God's word, I read: **"If you wish to be saved, not only must you surpass the hurdle of the great red dragon, and not only must you be able to discern the great red dragon, to see through to its hideous countenance and rebel against it utterly—there is also the hurdle of the antichrists for you to surpass. In the church, an antichrist is not only the enemy of God, but also the enemy of God's chosen people. If you cannot discern an antichrist, you are liable to be misled and won over, walk the path of an antichrist, and be cursed and punished by God. If that happens, your faith in God has completely failed. What must people possess to be granted salvation? First, they must understand many truths, and be able to discern the essence, disposition, and path of an antichrist. This is the only way to ensure not worshiping or following people while believing in God, and the only way to follow God to the very end. Only people who are able to discern an antichrist can truly believe in, follow, and bear witness for God. Some will then say, 'What do I do if I don't currently have the truth for that?' You must equip yourself with the truth with all haste; you must learn to see into people and things. Discerning an antichrist is no simple matter, and requires the ability to clearly see their essence, and see through the plots, tricks, intentions and goals behind everything they do. That way you will not be misled or controlled by them, and you can stand firm, safely and securely pursue the truth, and be steadfast on the path of pursuing the truth and attaining salvation. If you cannot surpass the hurdle of the antichrists, then it can be said that you are in great danger, and you are liable to be misled and captured by an antichrist and come to live under Satan's influence. ... So, if you want to get to**



where you can be granted salvation, the first test you must pass is one of being able to perceive and see through Satan, and you must also have the courage to stand up and expose and forsake Satan. Where, then, is Satan? Satan is at your side and all around you; it might even be living inside your heart. If you are living within Satan's disposition, it can be said that you belong to Satan. You cannot see or touch the Satan and evil spirits of the spiritual realm, but the Satans and living devils that exist in real life are everywhere. Any person who is averse to the truth is evil, and any leader or worker who does not accept the truth is an antichrist or false leader. Are such people not Satans and living devils? These people might be the very ones you worship and look up to; they could be the people who lead you or the people you have long admired, trusted, relied upon, and hoped for in your heart. In fact, however, they are roadblocks standing in your way and hindering you from pursuing the truth and obtaining salvation; they are false leaders and antichrists. They can take control of your life and the path you walk, and they can ruin your chance to be granted salvation. If you fail to discern them and see through them, then at any moment, you could be misled and captured. Thus, you are in great danger. If you cannot extricate yourself from this danger, you are Satan's sacrificial victim. Anyway, people who are misled and controlled, and become the followers of an antichrist can never, ever attain salvation. Because they do not love or pursue the truth, it is an inevitable result that they are misled and **follow an antichrist**" (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Three: They Exclude and Attack Those Who Pursue the Truth). After contemplating God's word, I understood His intention. God allows antichrists and evil people to appear in the church, and His wisdom is behind this. God is using their disturbance and misleading as a means to give people discernment so that they can free

themselves from Satan's dark influence and achieve salvation. I thought about how Zhang Xin had suppressed and punished me, and my brothers and sisters had misunderstood and rejected me. Although it caused me some suffering, during this process, I saw a real example of how antichrists mislead and harm people, I gained knowledge and discernment, and I clearly saw that Zhang Xin was an antichrist whose essence hates the truth and is hostile to God. I no longer felt constrained and controlled by her, and I learned from her failures and was able to avoid taking the wrong path. Weren't these real gains? Wasn't this all God's love and salvation? The more I thought about it, the more I realized that God is so wise and righteous, and the more I regretted not knowing His righteous disposition. When I was oppressed, I just pinned the blame for all that injustice on God, and misunderstood and complained about Him. I was so rebellious. Once I realized this, I felt indebted to God, and I wanted to repent. Exposing false leaders and antichrists is a good and righteous act, and it was my responsibility and obligation. If the evil people could be exposed and expelled, my brothers and sisters could have a good church life. Even if my brothers and sisters misunderstood me, or I was expelled by the antichrist, there was nothing to regret. I thought of another passage of God's word: **"Evil men will always be evil, and will never escape the day of punishment. Good men will always be good, and will be revealed when God's work comes to an end. Not one of the evil shall be deemed righteous, nor any one of the righteous deemed evil. Would I let any man stand wrongfully accused?"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Those Who Submit to God With a True Heart Shall Surely Be Gained by God). God's word was all too clear. God is righteous, He gives mercy and salvation to those who genuinely love Him, and He curses and punishes evil people and antichrists. This is determined by God's righteous disposition. Whether or

not I am saved is up to God, not the antichrists. Although our church was controlled by the antichrist, and we were suppressed, this was only temporary. God sees everything, the Holy Spirit reveals everything, and sooner or later, the antichrist would be revealed and eliminated. Over those days, I often pondered God's word, and slowly, I felt release in my heart, and I gained confidence in God's work.

One day, the upper-level leaders arranged for two sisters to resolve the chaos in our church. We were very excited, and we thanked God repeatedly. Unexpectedly, after we'd truthfully reported Zhang Xin's evil behavior, she was only dismissed for being a false leader. Although we all resumed church life, I couldn't help but feel uneasy. Zhang Xin was evil by nature. She'd unswervingly punished and suppressed people for the sake of her status, and drew in and defended evil people. She also didn't accept the truth at all, and she refused to repent. She wasn't a false leader, she was a true antichrist. But then I thought, "If I bring it up, will the brothers and sisters say I am stubbornly refusing to let go of her issues? Then forget it, it's none of my business. Anyway, she won't do anything to me now." With this in mind, I decided not to mention these things anymore. During my devotionals, I read in God's word: **"Antichrists will never accept the truth; they will persist in their wrongs to the end, never reversing course or repenting"** (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Excursus Six: Summarizing the Character of Antichrists and Their Disposition Essence (Part Three)). I knew that Zhang Xin had the essence of an antichrist, and if she wasn't expelled, she'd take any opportunity to disturb church life and create chaos, and then my brothers and sisters would suffer at her hands again. I had to stand up and expose Zhang Xin. I couldn't keep protecting myself. In God's word, I read: **"Once the truth has become life in you, when you observe someone who is blasphemous toward God, unfearful of God, and perfunctory while**

performing their duty, or who disrupts and disturbs church work, you will respond according to the truth principles, and will be able to identify and expose them as necessary. If the truth has not become your life, and you still live within your satanic disposition, then when you discover evil people and devils who cause disruptions and disturbances to the work of the church, you will turn a blind eye and a deaf ear; you will brush them aside, without reproach from your conscience. You will even think that anyone causing disturbances to the work of the church has nothing to do with you. No matter how much the work of the church and the interests of the house of God suffer, you don't care, intervene, or feel guilty—which makes you someone who has no conscience or reason, a disbeliever, a laborer. You eat what is of God's, drink what is of God's, and enjoy all that comes from God, yet feel that any harm to the interests of the house of God is not related to you—which makes you a traitor who bites the hand that feeds you. If you do not protect the interests of the house of God, are you even human? This is a demon that has insinuated itself into the church. You feign belief in God, pretend to be a chosen one, and you want to freeload in God's house. You are not living the life of a human being, are more like a fiend than a person, and are clearly one of the disbelievers. If you are someone who truly believes in God, then even if you have yet to gain the truth and life, at the very least you will speak and act from the side of God; at the very least, you will not stand idly by when you see the interests of the house of God being compromised. When you have the urge to turn a blind eye, you will feel guilty, and ill at ease, and will say to yourself, 'I can't sit here and do nothing, I must stand up and say something, I must take responsibility, I must expose this evil behavior, I must stop it, so that the interests of the house of God are not harmed,

**and the church life is not disturbed.’ If the truth has become your life, then not only will you have this courage and resolve, and will you be capable of understanding the matter completely, but you will also fulfill the responsibility you should bear for God’s work and for the interests of His house, and your duty will thereby be fulfilled”** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Part Three). Reading God’s word, I realized it was through His enlightenment and guidance that I had some discernment of Zhang Xin and Xiao Liu’s evil deeds. If I didn’t stand up and expose them, I had no conscience and I would fail to safeguard church work. I could no longer be selfish and despicable by looking the other way anymore. I thought of something written in the administrative decrees of the Age of Kingdom: **“Do everything that is beneficial to God’s work and nothing that is detrimental to the interests of God’s work. Defend God’s name, God’s testimony, and God’s work”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. The Ten Administrative Decrees That Must Be Obeyed by God’s Chosen People in the Age of Kingdom). I understood God’s requirements. I was a member of the church, so where the work of the church was concerned, I had a responsibility to stand up and protect it. Later, the upper-level leaders came to look into the situation. I reported Zhang Xin and Xiao Liu’s evil behavior and the upper-level leaders started to investigate again to verify this. Through fellowship at a gathering on the truth regarding identifying antichrists, the brothers and sisters all gained discernment. One by one, they exposed and reported the evil deeds of Zhang Xin and Xiao Liu. In the end it was determined that Zhang Xin was a true antichrist, and she was expelled from the church. Xiao Liu, after refusing to repent for her evils, was expelled for being an antichrist’s accomplice. Some brothers and sisters who were misled by Zhang Xin came to their senses, and they all rejected

Zhang Xin and no longer followed her. After that, church life returned to normal.

Although there were twists and turns to reporting this antichrist, being suppressed by her allowed me to gain some discernment of antichrists, develop my insight and receive some real experience and knowledge of God's righteous disposition, and my faith in God grew even more. All thanks be to God!

## 63. What Was Gained From Reporting

By Kristina, USA

In the summer of 2019, I heard that Sister Jocelyn, a church leader, had assigned Brother Eli as the supervisor of watering work, saying that his caliber was pretty good and that his fellowship in gatherings was enlightening. I was a little taken aback by the news. I'd worked with him in my duty before, so I knew a fair bit about him. It was true that he was a good talker and would speak non-stop in his fellowship at gatherings, but most of what he had to say was just words and doctrines and didn't really resolve real problems. He was also pretty arrogant and tended to do things his own way, and he'd make work decisions on his own without discussing things with others. This had led to some problems that harmed the work of the church. A sister and I brought these problems up with him several times, but he kept arguing back, wouldn't accept it, never reflected on himself, and in the end he never did change. After a while, I realized that he was someone who was always spouting words and doctrines, but couldn't accept the truth. A principle for electing leaders and workers in the church is that the individual has to have a pure understanding of the truth, they have to be able to accept the truth, have a sense of responsibility, and have a good caliber. Moreover, the supervisor of watering work should be good at resolving issues through fellowship on the truth and should be able to do some real work. Jocelyn made Eli the supervisor of watering work only because he had a bit of caliber and was eloquent. That was not in line with the principles. I got more uneasy the more I thought about it, and I wanted to go share my thoughts with Jocelyn, but I hesitated. I thought to myself, "I've just been dismissed from my duty as the supervisor of watering work. If I objected to the person who has just been selected by the leader, how

would that make me look? Would people say that I'd just been dismissed from that duty, so I was jealous of the person who had gotten the position, and that I was going out of my way to find fault with him? What if they said I was disrupting the church's work? Never mind, it's better to keep things simple instead of sticking my neck out looking for trouble." So I swallowed my words just as I was about to open my mouth. Later on, I heard that some brothers and sisters had also worked with Eli before, and they felt that he never shouldered a burden for his duty, and that he wasn't a good fit to serve as the supervisor. Hearing this, I felt even more certain that I was right about him and I thought, "I should talk to Jocelyn as soon as possible so that the work of the church won't be delayed because the wrong person has the job. But she was the one who appointed Eli, so if I bring it up with her, won't that be finding fault with her right to her face? When I've worked with her before, I've found her to be quite arrogant, self-righteous and overbearing. I talked to her about these things and not only did she refuse to accept it, but she really gave me a dressing-down. So if I mention a problem with the person she has promoted now, she might think I was being difficult with her, and that I was trying to trip her up. Then what would I do if she made things hard for me? I remember a few years ago when a sister and I pointed out some faults of a leader, that leader accused us of ganging up and attacking him. I lost my duty over that. Even though that leader was later exposed as an antichrist and expelled, I didn't have a duty for a long time because I was being held back by the antichrist. I'm worried that Jocelyn might not accept the problem I bring up, and will then find an excuse to take my duty away from me. What would I do then? Now is the most critical time for doing duty. If I can't do a duty and prepare good deeds at a time like this, I'm worried I'll lose my chance at salvation. Then



won't I lose overall?" At that thought, I put the idea of mentioning the problem out of my head.

After that, I heard some brothers and sisters say that since Eli became the supervisor of watering work, he'd just been spouting words and doctrines and shooting his mouth off in gatherings, and he wasn't helping people with their real problems at all. He wasn't taking on responsibility in his duty, either, and among the newcomers he was responsible for, quite a few had stopped going to gatherings because they'd been misled by the Communist Party's rumors. He hadn't offered them fellowship and support in time, so some of them had abandoned the faith. I realized how serious the problem was when I heard about this. If he kept serving as the supervisor, it would just do more harm to the church's work, and I knew I had to report this to Jocelyn right away. But I was afraid of offending her and getting myself in trouble, so I was really conflicted: "Should I report it, or not? If I do, I'm afraid of the impact it will have on me, but if I don't, I will feel guilty about it. I wonder how I can bring it up in a way that protects myself and guarantees nothing will go wrong." I became tangled up in these thoughts like I was stuck in a spiderweb, leaving me uneasy and restless.

One time in a gathering, our group leader asked us if we had any opinions on Eli's promotion, and if so, we should send him a message about them. I was really excited to hear that and thought, "This is a great opportunity. He will be at the forefront, and he will collect our opinions to share with the leader, then the leader wouldn't know who had written what. If she really tries to dig into it, the group leader will be the safeguard out in front." I therefore wrote out the problems I saw and gave that to the group leader. The next morning, to my surprise, he told me that he'd already forwarded what I reported to the leader. I felt so anxious as soon as I heard that he hadn't shared things with the leader as feedback from our group as a

whole. I asked, “Why did you just forward my message directly to Jocelyn?” Seeing what a strong reaction I had, he said, “Everyone’s thoughts were passed along to the leader and we should all be honest about our opinions. What is there to worry about?” I didn’t know what to say in response to this. I was surprised and kind of embarrassed, thinking, “That’s right, why was I too afraid to be up front about the problem?” I came before God in prayer, seeking guidance and reflecting on myself.

As I was reflecting, I read a passage of God’s words: **“What kind of person is one who lacks conscience and does not have the reason of normal humanity? Generally speaking, they are a person who lacks humanity, a person of extremely poor humanity. Going into more detail, what manifestations of lost humanity does this person exhibit? Have a go at analyzing what characteristics are found in such people and what specific manifestations they present. (They are selfish and base.) Selfish and base people are perfunctory in their actions and stand aloof from anything that does not concern them personally. They do not consider the interests of God’s house, nor do they show consideration for God’s intentions. They take on no burden of performing their duties or testifying for God, and they have no sense of responsibility. ... There are some people who do not take any responsibility regardless of the duty they are performing. They don’t promptly report problems they discover to their superiors, either. When they see people being disruptive and disturbing, they turn a blind eye. When they see evil people committing evil, they don’t try to stop them. They don’t protect the interests of the house of God, or consider what their duty and responsibility is. When they perform their duty, people like this don’t do any real work; they are people pleasers and are greedy for comfort; they speak and act only for their own**

**vanity, face, status, and interests, and are only willing to devote their time and effort to things that benefit them. The actions and intents of someone like that are clear to everyone: They pop out whenever there is an opportunity to show their face or to enjoy some blessing. But, when there is not an opportunity to show their face, or as soon as there is a time of suffering, they vanish from sight like a tortoise retracting its head. Does this kind of person have conscience and reason? (No.) Does a person without conscience and reason who behaves in this way feel self-reproach? Such people have no sense of self-reproach; the conscience of this kind of person serves no purpose. They have never felt reproach from their conscience, so can they feel the reproach or discipline of the Holy Spirit? No, they cannot”** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. In Giving One’s Heart to God, One Can Obtain the Truth). God’s words described the exact state I was in. I knew the leader wasn’t appointing people according to principles, and I saw that Eli wasn’t doing real work as the supervisor, and that he was hindering brothers’ and sisters’ life entry. I should have stood up and reported the problem to safeguard the church’s work. That is my bounden duty as one of God’s chosen people. But instead, I was scared I’d offend Jocelyn and that I’d lose my duty, so I turned a blind eye to the problem. Even though I did share my opinion with the group leader in writing, I didn’t want Jocelyn to know I was the one who’d written it, and I was afraid it would cause problems for me. I realized that I’d just been thinking of my personal interests in everything, not at all about how to safeguard the interests of the church. I was so lacking in conscience and reason. I’d enjoyed so much watering and sustenance from God’s words, but when the work of the church was suffering, I just thought about protecting myself. I didn’t have any loyalty to God. I was biting the hand that fed me. I didn’t have any humanity at all. I felt more guilty the

more I thought about it, and I wondered: “Why was I so wracked with fear, so anxious when I encountered such an issue? Saying a single honest word was so taxing for me—what sort of disposition was I being controlled by?”

Later I read a passage of God’s words that made it all clear for me. Almighty God says: **“Most people wish to pursue and practice the truth, but much of the time they merely have a resolution and the desire to do so; the truth has not become their life. As a result, when they come across evil forces or encounter evil people and bad people committing evil deeds, or false leaders and antichrists doing things in a way that violates principles—thus disturbing the work of the church and harming God’s chosen ones—they lose the courage to stand up and speak out. What does it mean when you have no courage? Does it mean that you are timid or inarticulate? Or is it that you do not understand thoroughly, and therefore do not have the confidence to speak up? Neither; this is primarily the consequence of being constrained by corrupt dispositions. One of the corrupt dispositions you reveal is a deceitful disposition; when something happens to you, the first thing you think of is your own interests, the first thing you consider is the consequences, whether this will be beneficial to you. This is a deceitful disposition, is it not? Another is a selfish and base disposition. You think, ‘What does a loss to the interests of God’s house have to do with me? I’m not a leader, so why should I care? It’s got nothing to do with me. It’s not my responsibility.’ Such thoughts and words are not something that you consciously think, but are produced by your subconscious—which is the corrupt disposition revealed when people encounter an issue. Corrupt dispositions such as this govern the way you think, they bind your hands and feet, and control what you say. In your heart, you want to stand up and speak, but you have misgivings,**

**and even when you do speak out, you beat around the bush, and leave yourself wiggle room, or else you prevaricate and don't tell the truth. People who are clear-eyed can see this; in truth, you know in your heart that you have not said all you should, that what you have said has had no effect, that you were merely going through the motions, and that the problem has not been solved. You have not fulfilled your responsibility, yet you say overtly that you have fulfilled your responsibility, or that what was happening was unclear to you. Is this true? And is it what you really think? Are you not then completely under the control of your satanic disposition? Even though some of what you say is in line with the facts, in key places and on crucial issues, you lie and deceive people, which proves that you are someone who lies, and who lives by their satanic disposition. Everything you say and think has been processed by your brain, leading to your every utterance being fake, empty, a lie; actually, everything you say is contrary to the facts, for the sake of justifying yourself, for your own benefit, and you feel you have achieved your aims when you have misled people and made them believe. Such is the way you speak; it also represents your disposition. You are wholly controlled by your own satanic disposition. You have no power over what you say and do. Even if you wanted to, you could not tell the truth or say what you really think; even if you wanted to, you could not practice the truth; even if you wanted to, you could not fulfill your responsibilities”** (The Word, Vol. 3.

The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Part Three). Reading God's words, I understood that I wasn't practicing the truth or safeguarding the work of the church because I was deceitful, selfish, and despicable by nature. I thought about how I knew that Jocelyn wasn't following the principles in her appointment of Eli and then how he was compromising the church's work

because he wasn't doing any real work. I saw all of this as clear as day and I knew that I should point these things out, that this would be helpful for the church's work, and that this would benefit everyone's life entry, but I never mustered up the courage to stand up and say something. Then, when my group leader took the initiative, I finally put my views in writing, but when I found out that he had passed it directly on to the leader, I was disgruntled and felt like he'd exposed me. I was racking my brains, calculating how to protect myself so that I didn't stand to lose anything. I was going by the satanic philosophies of "Every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost," "Let things drift if they do not affect one personally," "Sensible people are good at self-protection, seeking only to avoid making mistakes," and "The bird that sticks its neck out is the one that gets shot." These things were controlling my thoughts, keeping me bound under their spell, and making me cunning and deceitful. Though I had faith and read God's words, there was no place whatsoever for God in my heart. I could hardly say a single honest thing or shed light on an actual situation. I was a lapdog for Satan, living a pathetic existence. I was selfish, despicable, and lacking even a shred of humanity. It really made God detest me. I felt incredible regret and silently said a prayer to God: "Oh God, I'm so selfish and deceitful. I didn't take any responsibility when I saw a problem and I wasn't practicing the truth or protecting the work of the church. I've been living in such a pathetic way. God, I don't want to live this way anymore. I want to practice the truth and satisfy You." I felt a little more confidence after my prayer and I stopped worrying about how Jocelyn might react after reading my report.

I had thought that after reading our reports of her problems, Jocelyn would be aware that she was violating principles in appointing Eli, but she did not reflect on herself and did not dismiss him promptly. Also, I

discovered that she wasn't actually dealing with problems of projects going slowly or being ineffective. I thought: "She can't accept the truth or do any real work, so based on the principles of discerning false leaders, it looks very likely that that is exactly what she is." I wanted to report this to the higher-ups, but again, I hesitated, thinking, "What if she found out, what would she think of me? If she isn't dismissed but stays on as a leader, would she look for excuses to suppress me? Never mind. Refusing to change or do real work is her problem, so I should just do my own duty well and see how things go." So I left the matter as it was.

A little while later I heard that there was a leader at another church who'd been exposed as an antichrist and kicked out. He'd done quite a bit of evil in his time as leader, and everyone saw this, but nobody dared speak up. Not a single person in the whole church reported on him, and even after he was exposed and kicked out, they still didn't bring the evil things he'd done to light. They just shifted the blame, claiming ignorance. They were all covering for and siding with that antichrist, opposing God by acting as accomplices of Satan, which really offended God's disposition. As a result, the whole church was isolated so they could reflect on themselves. This made a really big impression on me, and it reminded me of some of God's words: **"If a church contains no one who is willing to practice the truth and no one who can stand firm in their testimony to God, then that church should be completely isolated, and its connections with other churches must be severed. This is called 'burying death'; this is what it means to spurn Satan. If a church contains several local bullies, and they are followed by 'little flies' that entirely lack discernment, and if people in such a church, even after having seen the truth, are still incapable of rejecting the binds and manipulation of these bullies, then all those fools will be eliminated in the end. These little flies might not**

**have done anything terrible, but they are even more deceitful, even more slick and evasive, and everyone like this will be eliminated. Not a single one shall remain! Those who belong to Satan will be returned to Satan, while those who belong to God will surely go in search of the truth; this is decided by their natures. Let all those who follow Satan perish! No pity will be shown to such people. Let those who search for the truth be provided for, and may they take pleasure in God's word to their hearts' content. God is righteous; He would not show favoritism to anyone. If you are a devil, then you are incapable of practicing the truth; if you are someone who searches for the truth, then it is certain that you will not be taken captive by Satan. This is beyond all doubt"**

(The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. A Warning to Those Who Do Not Practice the Truth). From God's words, I got a sense of His majestic, righteous disposition that tolerates no offense and His wrath for those who don't put the truth into practice. Even though it seemed on the surface like they didn't do anything truly evil, they looked on while the antichrist did evil and they did nothing to report or expose him. They allowed the antichrist to run rampant, ruining the work of the church, but didn't lift a finger. They were covering for the antichrist and were Satan's accomplices. This was taking part in the antichrist's evil and it seriously offended God's disposition. Wasn't I exactly the same? I'd read so much of God's word and I'd gained some discernment. I saw that the leader wasn't following the principles in her selection of personnel, that she couldn't accept the truth, and what's more, that she didn't do real work, which had already been a hindrance to the work of the church. I saw that she was a false leader but I was afraid I would offend her, and that she would suppress me, so I let it slide because it didn't affect me personally. I felt like whether she changed or not was her business, and had nothing to do with me. I'd enjoyed so much sustenance



from God, but I still bit the hand that fed me and stood on Satan's side. I saw the interests of the church being compromised, yet I did nothing. Wasn't I just like Satan? Though I was performing a duty, God was keeping watch over every little thing I did. I knew if I didn't repent, I would be detested and eliminated by Him. This was a terrifying thought for me. I prayed and repented to God right away: "God, I saw a false leader acting in a way that does not accord with principles and disrupting church work but I didn't expose and report her, just so I could protect myself. I've been an accomplice to Satan. I'm so rebellious and detestable. God, I want to repent to You."

Afterward, I wondered, "Why was I so scared to report the leader's problems? What was I really afraid of?" Through my prayer and seeking, I read a couple passages of God's words that helped me understand the issue better. The words of God say: **"What is the attitude that people should have in terms of how to treat a leader or worker? If what a leader or worker does is right and in line with the truth, then you can obey them; if what they do is wrong and not in line with the truth, then you should not obey them and you can expose them, oppose them and raise a different opinion. If they are unable to do actual work or do evil deeds that cause a disturbance to church work, and are revealed to be a false leader, a false worker, or an antichrist, then you can discern, expose and report them. However, some of God's chosen people do not understand the truth and are particularly cowardly; they fear being suppressed and tormented by false leaders and antichrists, so they don't dare uphold principles. They say, 'If the leader kicks me out, I'm finished; if he has everyone expose or forsake me, then I will no longer be able to believe in God. If I'm expelled from the church, then God will not want me and will not save me. And won't my faith have been**

**for nothing?’ Is such thinking not ridiculous? Do such people have true faith in God? Would a false leader or antichrist be representing God when they expel you? When a false leader or antichrist torments and expels you, this is the work of Satan, and has nothing to do with God; when people are cleared out or expelled from the church, this is only in line with God’s intentions when there is a joint decision between the church and all of God’s chosen people, and when the clearing out or expulsion is wholly in line with the work arrangements of God’s house and the truth principles of God’s words. How could being expelled by a false leader or antichrist mean you cannot be saved? This is the persecution of Satan and the antichrist, and does not mean that you will not be saved by God. Whether or not you can be saved depends on God. No human being is qualified to decide whether you can be saved by God. You must be clear about this. And to treat your expulsion by a false leader or antichrist as being expelled by God—is this not misinterpreting God? It is. And this is not only misinterpreting God, but also rebelling against God. It is also kind of blasphemous against God. And is misinterpreting God in this way not ignorant and foolish? When a false leader or antichrist expels you, why do you not seek the truth? Why don’t you seek out somebody who understands the truth in order to gain some discernment? And why do you not report this to the higher-ups? This proves that you do not believe that the truth reigns supreme in the house of God, it shows that you do not have true faith in God, that you are not someone who truly believes in God. If you trust in the almightiness of God, why do you fear the retaliation of a false leader or antichrist? Can they determine your fate? If you are capable of discernment, and detect that their actions are at odds with the truth, why not fellowship with God’s chosen people who understand the**

**truth? You have a mouth, so why do you dare not speak up? Why are you so afraid of a false leader or antichrist? This proves that you are a coward, a good-for-nothing, a lackey of Satan. If, when threatened by a false leader or antichrist, you dare not report them to the higher-ups, this shows that you have already been bound by Satan and that you are of one heart with them; is this not following Satan? How could someone like this be one of God's chosen people? They are scum, pure and simple"** (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Three: They Exclude and Attack Those Who Pursue the Truth). **"All of God's work or words related to humanity's destination will deal with people appropriately according to each individual's essence; not the slightest error will occur, and not a single mistake will be made. It is only when people do work that human feelings or meaning enter the mix. The work God does is most appropriate; He absolutely does not bring false claims against any created being"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. God and Man Will Enter Into Rest Together). After reading this, I saw that I didn't dare report on the leader's problem because my perspective was all fallacious. I was thinking that a leader could determine my future and fate, so if I offended a leader and they suppressed me, and stopped me from performing a duty, then I'd lose all hope of salvation. I saw leaders as being even higher than God. In what way was I a believer? Man's fate is in God's hands. What my final outcome is, and whether I can be saved is entirely up to God. It is not decided by any human being. Even though I'd been mistreated in the past for pointing out issues in a leader's work, the brothers and sisters later realized that he was an antichrist and he was removed from the church. I hadn't lost my chance at salvation because I temporarily suffered from an antichrist's unfair suppression, but I did develop discernment about antichrists and learn some lessons. There are some brothers and sisters who

expose and report false leaders and antichrists to protect the work of the church, and then the false leaders and antichrists suppress and lash out at them. Some of them are even kicked out of the church, but because they have true faith and continue sharing the gospel and doing their duty, they still have the Holy Spirit's work and God's guidance. They can still prepare good deeds and meet with salvation. When the antichrists are exposed and removed, then they are allowed back into the church. This showed me that God is righteous and that the truth reigns in God's house. God rules over all things. I thought again about that church where not a single person exposed the antichrist and everyone just turned a blind eye to his evil deeds, ignoring what didn't impact them personally, giving the antichrist free rein to disrupt the church. Even though they weren't suppressed and could keep doing their duty in the church, they were siding with the antichrist, standing against God. In the end the whole church was hated and spurned by God. Thinking about it, I came to believe that not reporting false leaders and antichrists is safeguarding Satan and harming God's chosen people, and that not reporting them when they disturb the work of the church offends God's disposition. I felt kind of afraid, and really despised myself. This gave me the motivation to put the truth into practice.

I thought of this passage of God's words: **“Do not always do things for your own sake and do not constantly consider your own interests; do not consider the interests of man, and give no thought to your own pride, reputation, and status. You must first consider the interests of God's house, and make them your priority. You should be considerate of God's intentions and begin by contemplating whether or not there have been impurities in the performance of your duty, whether you have been loyal, fulfilled your responsibilities, and given it your all, as well as whether or not you have been wholeheartedly thinking about**

**your duty and the work of the church. You must consider these things”**

(The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Freedom and Liberation Can Be Gained Only by Casting Off One’s Corrupt Disposition). God’s words showed me a path to practice. In facing this matter I had to put the interests of the church first, I had to prioritize that and consciously rebel against my wrong motives. I had to stop putting my personal interests first. So I wrote out the problems that I had seen and got ready to report them to a higher leader. Just then, a few other sisters told me that they had also noticed that Jocelyn didn’t do real work, had not been solving longstanding problems in the church, that she promoted people as she wished and that she kept refusing to dismiss some people of poor caliber who were incompetent in their work, and who had for a long time been perfunctory in their duty, using the excuse that she couldn’t find any suitable candidates. This had done a lot of damage to the work of the church. According to the principles, Jocelyn was a false leader. So we wrote a letter reporting her together, and submitted it to a leader.

Later, the upper leaders looked into the situation, and they discovered that Jocelyn never did real work, was dictatorial in her approach, and used her status to constrain others. She was identified as a false leader and removed from her position. Eli was found to be unsuitable as the supervisor of watering work, too, so he was assigned to another duty. All sorts of feelings welled up for me when I saw how it had turned out. I saw that in God’s house, Christ and the truth really do hold sway, and I felt more confidence to put the truth into practice. I was overcome with gratitude for God. I’m so grateful for the enlightenment and guidance of God’s words that allowed me to gradually break free of the control and bonds of those satanic philosophies, and to summon the courage to practice the truth, to report a false leader, and live with some dignity!

## 64. Is the Whole Bible Given by Inspiration of God?

By Zhao Guang, China

In 1998, my cousin, Yang, came to share the Lord Jesus' gospel with me. He brought me a copy of the Bible, and told me that the whole Bible is inspired by God, that everything inside is the word of God, and that within lay the path to God's kingdom and eternal life. Hearing I could obtain eternal life immediately piqued my curiosity, and afterward, I read the Bible when I had time. I soon knew that the Lord Jesus was the Redeemer of humanity, and accepted Him. Because I was passionate about seeking God, I later became a co-worker and started evangelizing and preaching to the church. I firmly believed that the Bible was the foundation and guide for my faith.

Over a few years, the church dried up and it was increasingly difficult to feel the Holy Spirit's work. Most of the believers became negative and weak, their faith had gone cold, and many even returned to the secular world. Facing all this made me feel anxious and helpless, and there was weakness in my heart. Could the Lord have abandoned us? But every time I thought of how the Lord said, **“He that endures to the end shall be saved”** (Matthew 10:22), my heart grew more steadfast. I trusted the Lord would not mistreat those who followed Him with a sincere heart, and continued to expend myself for the Lord. I often prayed in my heart and asked the Lord to strengthen our faith. It was at this time that a church called Eastern Lightning appeared. They testified that the Lord had already returned, was expressing truths, and was carrying out the work of judgment in the last days. Many brothers and sisters in the Lord converted to Eastern Lightning, and it grieved me. What I found particularly hard to accept was hearing

those from Eastern Lightning saying that the Bible contained the words of both God and man. I thought, “The Bible clearly states, ‘All scripture is given by inspiration of God’ (2 Timothy 3:16). Everything in the Bible is the word of God, pastors and elders say this all the time. So isn’t what Eastern Lightning says contradicting the Bible and betraying the Lord?” Because of this, I was very much against Eastern Lightning. From then on, most of our meetings discussed how to guard against and hold off Eastern Lightning, and how to protect the church from losing its flock. In order to prevent people from Eastern Lightning stealing our sheep, I told my brothers and sisters: “The Bible is wholly inspired by God, and all of God’s words are in it. If we believe in God, we cannot depart from the Bible. To do so would be heresy.” By doing this, I hoped to prevent them from investigating Almighty God’s work in the last days, but they kept accepting Almighty God.

One time, after returning home from a church gathering, I saw my wife kneading dough, and beside her sat a woman in her sixties, fellowshiping with her. I guessed she believed in Almighty God, and my expression turned dark, and I said, “You deny and have abandoned the Bible, and yet you still claim to believe in God? Get out of here!” The sister patiently said to me, “Brother, don’t get upset. Don’t blindly jump to conclusions. We also used to read the Bible and take the verse, ‘All scripture is given by inspiration of God’ (2 Timothy 3:16), to mean that all the words in the Bible are the words of God. It was only later that we realized this interpretation is inaccurate.” “What proof do you have?” I asked disdainfully. The sister said, “For example, the Gospel of Luke says: ‘For as much as many have taken in hand to set forth in order a declaration of those things which are most surely believed among us, Even as they delivered them to us, which from the beginning were eyewitnesses, and ministers of the word’ (Luke 1:1–

2). Doesn't this mean that the Gospel of Luke was written by Luke from his experiences and investigation? Luke just wrote down some of the facts he saw and heard at the time. This is a book written by man, so how can we say it's all the word of God? Things which are inspired by God don't need to be experienced by man or mixed with human ideas. The two are clearly different." The sister's words did make some sense. I took a breath and sized the sister up out of the corner of my eye, thinking: "She's old and doesn't look particularly well-educated, yet she has insight like this. Unbelievable!" For a moment I couldn't think of a response to what she'd said, and my face got flushed. I was worried I'd be misled if I kept listening to what she said, so I cleared my throat and said: "Enough, we have different beliefs. Don't come here again." As I said this, I pushed the sister out the door. She repeatedly advised me to read the words of Almighty God, to determine whether the Lord has returned, but I closed my heart to her. I didn't want to hear it. With tears in her eyes, she said so earnestly, "Brother, please think twice about this!" Hearing the sincerity of her words, seeing the genuine expression in her eyes and her frail figure in the winter wind, I felt a sharp stab in my heart, and I didn't know what this feeling was. But I remembered how all the words in the Bible are from God, and that deviating from it isn't believing in God. What they preached went beyond the Bible, yet they came to our church to steal sheep. I couldn't listen to what they preached, and I must be steadfast in my stance. After this, I was still at peace with my thinking and actions, and spared no effort in "protecting" the flock. Despite this, whenever someone from The Church of Almighty God was mentioned, I felt nervous. Their fellowship made sense and was hard to refute. There was nothing to do but take a hardline approach, and implement a policy of not listening to them, reading their books, or interacting with them.



Before I knew it, it was early fall 2004. My cousin, Yang, called me saying he needed me for something urgent. I rushed over, and my cousin introduced Brother Wang Chuanyang to me. He said Chuanyang was a preacher, and he asked us to dialogue about our understanding of the Lord. I was really happy, and after saying hello, my cousin gave me a Bible and took out two thick hardcover books. I looked, and the cover said: **The Word Appears in the Flesh**. These were books from Eastern Lightning! I jumped to my feet, and said: “Yang, have you accepted Eastern Lightning?” My cousin chuckled and said: “That’s right. I asked you here today because I wanted to fellowship with you. I hope you’ll take a look into Almighty God’s work in the last days.” At this point, I recalled how pastors and elders always said that the Bible is wholly inspired by God, and all of God’s words are in it. The teachings of Eastern Lightning went beyond the Bible, they diverged from the Lord’s teachings. Under no circumstances should we listen to them. Our best countermove was to evade them. So I made an excuse about there being something I needed to attend to back home. My cousin said levelly, “Why do you run away every time you see someone who believes in Almighty God? If you know the truth, why are you afraid of being misled? Since you’re here, why not calm your heart and seek a little?” There was nothing I could do but return to my seat, but my mind was in a turmoil: How should I handle this situation today? I prayed silently in my heart to the Lord: “Oh, Lord! I entrust this situation to You. Please protect and lead me.” Then, my cousin picked up **The Word Appears in the Flesh** and read a passage of Almighty God’s word: “**I advise you to tread the path of belief in God with care. Do not jump to conclusions; what is more, do not be casual and thoughtless in your belief in God. You should know that, at the very least, those who believe in God should possess humble and God-fearing hearts. Those who have heard**

**the truth and yet turn their nose up at it are foolish and ignorant. Those who have heard the truth and yet carelessly jump to conclusions or condemn it are beset by arrogance. No one who believes in Jesus is qualified to curse or condemn others. You should all be someone with sense and who accepts the truth. Perhaps, having heard the way of truth and having read the word of life, you believe that only one in 10,000 of these words are in line with your convictions and the Bible, and then you should continue to seek in that 10,000th of these words. I still advise you to be humble, to not be over-confident, and to not exalt yourself too highly. With the bit of a God-fearing heart you possess, you will gain greater light. If you carefully examine and repeatedly contemplate these words, you shall understand whether or not they are the truth, and whether or not they are life”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. By the Time You Behold the Spiritual Body of Jesus, God Will Have Made Heaven and Earth Anew). I sat there seemingly unmoved, but in reality the book’s words had made an impression. All these demands were in line with the Lord Jesus’ words. The Lord said: **“Blessed are the poor in spirit: for theirs is the kingdom of heaven”** (Matthew 5:3). Those who believe in God should have an attitude of humility and seeking. I condemned and judged Eastern Lightning blindly without seeking or investigating. I was truly arrogant and self-righteous. I felt guilty, and thought to myself: “These words are something special, they are similar to the Lord’s teachings. Could these actually be words uttered by the returned Lord?” I also thought of all the times I had interacted with people from The Church of Almighty God: They were dignified and upright, they lovingly spread the gospel, were patient, and their explanations to questions were particularly well-founded and convincing. How could they accomplish this by themselves without the work of the Holy Spirit? This showed that the way of Almighty God was

definitely special. If Almighty God truly was the returned Lord Jesus, and I didn't seek or investigate, wouldn't I be missing the chance to receive the Lord's arrival and end up rejected by Him? I thought: "I should stop being stubborn. Why don't I try seeking today on whether the Lord has actually come or not? Then I will have gained clarity." I thought for a moment, then said resolutely: "The words you read were certainly good, and very special. But I don't understand. The Bible is the canon of Christianity. For over two thousand years, the religious world has always believed that the Bible is wholly inspired by God, and that everything recorded in the Bible is the word of God, and the Bible therefore represents the Lord. I accepted this to be true all my years of being a Christian, but now you say that the Bible contains the words of both God and man. Isn't this in contradiction with the Bible? This is denying the Lord, betraying Him, and is abominable blasphemy!" Chuanyang said patiently: "Does saying the Bible is wholly inspired by God match reality? What words from the Lord do we have as proof? The Lord Jesus never said that the Bible was wholly inspired by God, and the Holy Spirit didn't testify this, either. What Paul said only represents his own understanding of the Bible, and absolutely does not represent God." I was stunned. What he was saying made sense—how had I never realized this? Then, Chuanyang asked: "Paul said, 'All scripture is given by inspiration of God' (2 Timothy 3:16). When he says 'scripture,' is he actually referring to the whole Bible, or just a part of it?" I said with complete confidence, "He meant the whole Bible of course." Chuanyang continued: "Actually, Paul wrote 2 Timothy over 60 years after the Lord came, and at that time, the New Testament hadn't been compiled yet, only the Old Testament. Over 90 years after the Lord came, John wrote down the visions he had seen on the island of Patmos, which later became the Book of Revelation. Over 300 years after the Lord came, at a meeting in Nicaea,

religious leaders from various countries selected the four Gospels and some other epistles from among a large number of letters from the disciples, and, along with John's Book of Revelation, compiled them into the New Testament. After that, they combined the Old and New Testaments into one book, which is the entire Old and New Testament that we read today. The New Testament was compiled after 300 A.D., and Paul wrote 2 Timothy after 60 A.D., which is over 200 years before the New Testament was compiled. From this, we can see that when Paul said, 'All scripture is given by inspiration of God,' the scripture he was referring to did not include the New Testament." After I heard this, I couldn't help but nod my head and say: "If the scripture Paul was talking about didn't include the New Testament, then he must mean the Old Testament." Chuanyang said: "Yes, but even the Old Testament wasn't entirely inspired by God. It will be clear once we read the words of Almighty God."

Almighty God says: **"You must know how many parts the Bible includes; the Old Testament contains Genesis, Exodus..., and there are also the books of prophecy that the prophets wrote. At the end, the Old Testament finishes with the Book of Malachi. ... These books of prophecy were quite different from the other books of the Bible; they were words spoken or written by those who had been given the Spirit of prophecy—by those who had gained the visions or voice from Jehovah. Apart from the books of prophecy, everything else in the Old Testament is made up of records made by people after Jehovah had finished His work. These books cannot stand in for the foretelling spoken by the prophets raised up by Jehovah, just as Genesis and Exodus cannot be compared to the Book of Isaiah and the Book of Daniel. The prophecies were spoken before the work had been carried out; the other books, meanwhile, were written after the work had been**

**finished, which was what people were capable of”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Concerning the Bible (1)). **“Not everything in the Bible is a record of the words personally spoken by God. The Bible simply documents the previous two stages of God’s work, of which one part is a record of the foretelling of the prophets, and one part is the experiences and knowledge written by people used by God throughout the ages. Human experiences are tainted with human opinions and knowledge, and this is something which is unavoidable. In many of the books of the Bible are human notions, human biases, and humans’ distorted comprehension. Of course, most of the words are the result of the enlightenment and illumination of the Holy Spirit, and they are correct understandings—yet it still cannot be said that they are entirely accurate expressions of the truth. Their views on certain things are nothing more than knowledge derived from personal experience, or the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit. The foretelling of the prophets was personally instructed by God: The prophecies of the like of Isaiah, Daniel, Ezra, Jeremiah, and Ezekiel came from the direct instruction of the Holy Spirit; these people were seers, they had received the Spirit of prophecy, and they were all prophets of the Old Testament. During the Age of Law, these people, who had received the inspirations of Jehovah, spoke many prophecies, which were directly instructed by Jehovah”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Concerning the Bible (3)). After this, Chuanyang fellowshipped: “Almighty God’s words are very clear. The prophecies of the prophets were personally instructed by the Holy Spirit, and relayed by the prophets. These are God’s words, and convey God’s exact meaning. Words inspired by God are always marked clearly in the Bible; for example, at the beginning of Isaiah it says, ‘The vision of Isaiah the son of Amoz’ (Isaiah 1:1). The beginning of Jeremiah says, ‘To whom the

word of Jehovah came' (Jeremiah 1:2). People need only pay attention to be certain of which words are inspired by God. Apart from God's words and the prophets' prophecies, the rest of the Old Testament are accounts written by people after experiencing God's work. Most of these are records of memories, and these experiences and words are all from people, we can't say they're God's words, so it's hard to avoid them being adulterated with human ideas. Like how it says in 2 Samuel 24:1, 'And again the anger of Jehovah was kindled against Israel, and He moved David against them to say, Go, number Israel and Judah.' Yet, 1 Chronicles 21:1 says: 'And Satan stood up against Israel, and provoked David to number Israel.' Both these verses record when David numbered Israel. In one place it says Jehovah God moved David to number Israel, and in the other it says it was Satan that moved David. If it was inspired by God, how could there be such a big discrepancy? If the entire Old Testament was inspired by God, would God have made a mistake when inspiring a story of the same event?" After hearing Chuanyang's words, my mind was opened significantly, and my stubborn mental defenses began to crumble. I said: "If the Old Testament wasn't completely inspired by God, then we can't take the New Testament as being wholly the word of God, either, because it's all records from the apostles." Chuanyang said happily: "Thank God, your understanding is correct. In fact, in the New Testament, only the Lord Jesus' words and the prophecy in Revelation are God's words. The rest are words from disciples, Pharisees, the average people, soldiers, and the devil. Isn't it absurd to say that everything in the Bible is the word of God? Isn't this blasphemy?"

After this, Chuanyang read me another passage of Almighty God's words: **"Today, people believe the Bible is God, and that God is the Bible. So, too, do they believe that all the words of the Bible were the only words God spoke, and that they were all said by God. Those who**

**believe in God even think that, although all of the sixty-six books of the Old and New Testament were written by people, they were all given by inspiration of God, and a record of the utterances of the Holy Spirit. This is the distorted comprehension of man, and it does not completely accord with the facts. In fact, apart from the books of prophecy, most of the Old Testament is a historical record. Some of the epistles of the New Testament come from people's experiences, and some come from the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit; the Pauline epistles, for example, arose from the work of a man, they were all the result of the Holy Spirit's enlightenment, and they were written for the churches, and were words of exhortation and encouragement for the brothers and sisters of the churches. They were not words spoken by the Holy Spirit—Paul could not speak on behalf of the Holy Spirit, and neither was he a prophet, much less did he see the visions that John beheld. His epistles were written for the churches of Ephesus, Corinth, Galatia, and other churches. ... If people see the epistles or words like Paul's as the utterances of the Holy Spirit, and worship them as God, then it can only be said that they are too indiscriminating. To speak more harshly, is this not simply blasphemy? How could a man talk on behalf of God? And how could people bow down before the records of his epistles and of the words he spoke as if they were a holy book, or a heavenly book? Could the words of God be casually uttered by a man? How could a man talk on behalf of God?"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Concerning the Bible (3)). The more I listened the more I understood. I lamented: "Before, I didn't understand the context in which Paul spoke these words. I thought the Bible was wholly inspired by God, and that its words were all God's, and that believing the Bible was believing in God. This interpretation was so distorted! I insisted on taking people's words in the

Bible as God's, and I used these as the basis for my faith. Doesn't this depart from the Lord's way?"

Then Chuanyang fellowshiped, "The Bible is just a testament to God's work. It's a historical book and a record of God's work during the Ages of Law and Grace. How can it be put on the same level as God? So the Lord Jesus rebuked the Pharisees, saying: **'Search the scriptures; for in them you think you have eternal life: and they are they which testify of Me. And you will not come to Me, that you might have life'** (John 5:39–40). The Bible is just a testament to God, it does not hold eternal life. Only God can grant people eternal life!" I remember my cousin fellowshiped as well that through reading the Bible, we understand God's work in the Ages of Law and Grace, we know everything in the universe was created by God, how God promulgated the law to lead humanity, and how we should live on earth and worship God. We know what sin is, and the sort of people God blesses or curses. We also know how we should confess our sins and repent to the Lord, how to be humble, patient, forgiving, and how to take up our cross and follow the Lord. We see the Lord Jesus' endless compassion and love for us, and understand that it is only by believing in the Lord Jesus and coming before Him that we can enjoy God's abundant grace and truth. But as to what truths God will express in the last days, and how God will judge and cleanse man's corruption, and resolve the root of our sin, we haven't the slightest idea because these truths were not recorded in the Bible. On the foundation of the Lord Jesus' work of redemption, Almighty God of the last days has carried out the work of judgment starting with the house of God, expressed all truth about purifying humanity, and revealed corrupt humanity's satanic disposition and nature, so that our corruption is purified and we become people who love and submit to God, and we are made to recognize God's disposition is holy and righteous and does not permit



offense. These words are the true way of eternal life and they fulfill the Lord Jesus' prophecy completely: **"I have yet many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. However, when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth"** (John 16:12–13). This book, **The Word Appears in the Flesh**, is the word prophesied in Revelation that the Holy Spirit speaks to all churches. It's the scroll opened by the Lamb. Through reading Almighty God's words, true believers in God from the religious world have recognized God's voice, turned to Almighty God, and have followed the Lamb's footsteps.

After my cousin said this, Chuanyang read another passage of Almighty God's words: **"Christ of the last days brings life, and brings the enduring and everlasting way of truth. This truth is the path by which man gains life, and it is the only path by which man shall know God and be approved by God. If you do not seek the way of life provided by Christ of the last days, then you shall never gain the approval of Jesus, and shall never be qualified to enter the gate of the kingdom of heaven, for you are both a puppet and prisoner of history. Those who are controlled by regulations, by words, and shackled by history will never be able to gain life nor gain the perpetual way of life. This is because all they have is turbid water which has been clung to for thousands of years instead of the water of life that flows from the throne. Those who are not supplied with the water of life will forever remain corpses, playthings of Satan, and sons of hell. How, then, can they behold God? If you only try to hold on to the past, only try to keep things as they are by standing still, and do not try to change the status quo and discard history, then will you not always be against God? The steps of God's work are vast and mighty, like surging waves and rolling thunders—yet you sit passively awaiting destruction, clinging to your**

**folly and doing nothing. In this way, how can you be considered someone who follows the footsteps of the Lamb? How can you justify the God that you hold on to as a God who is always new and never old? And how can the words of your yellowed books carry you across into a new age? How can they lead you to seek the steps of God's work? And how can they take you up to heaven? What you hold in your hands are words that can provide but temporary solace, not truths that are capable of giving life. The words of scriptures you read can only enrich your tongue and are not words of philosophy that can help you know human life, much less the paths that can lead you to perfection. Does this discrepancy not give you cause for reflection? Does it not make you realize the mysteries contained within? Are you capable of delivering yourself to heaven to meet God on your own? Without the coming of God, can you take yourself into heaven to enjoy family happiness with God? Are you still dreaming now? I suggest, then, that you stop dreaming and look at who is working now—look to see who is now carrying out the work of saving man during the last days. If you do not, you shall never gain the truth, and shall never gain life”** (The Word, Vol. 1.

The Appearance and Work of God. Only Christ of the Last Days Can Give Man the Way of Eternal Life). After hearing these words, I was deeply shaken. God's work is always progressing forward, and the word of God is limitless. God's words and His work cannot be circumscribed by the Bible. If I clung to my own religious views, in the end it would be me who lost out. I thought of how much Bible knowledge I'd amassed during my years as a Christian, yet I barely had an understanding of the truth or of God. On the contrary, I was becoming increasingly arrogant. The Lord had returned, but not only did I not investigate, I even used words from the Bible to resist and judge Almighty God's appearance and work. I was just like the Pharisees who resisted the

Lord Jesus. I was truly blind and didn't know God! Not only did I cling to my notions, I even obstructed others from investigating. Wasn't this causing a disruption? If others couldn't welcome the Lord or follow His new work, they'd have lost their chance to enter God's kingdom. I was dragging others into hell and resisting God! I had committed such an evil, yet God still showed me compassion and let me hear His voice. This was truly God's salvation! After this, we continued fellowshiping on the Bible. We also talked about why the church in the Age of Grace became desolate, how God saves humanity through three stages of work, and more.

In the time that followed, I read lots of Almighty God's words. The more I read, the more I became convinced that this is the voice of God, that Almighty God is the Lord Jesus returned, and that He is Christ of the last days. Indeed, the way to enter the kingdom of heaven is not to be found in the Bible—only Almighty God can give man the path to eternal life. I happily accepted Almighty God's work in the last days. Later, my wife also accepted it. Together, we spread the gospel and brought some of the faithful members of our church into the house of God. Thanks be to God!

## **65. A Duty Isn't a Bargaining Chip for Blessings**

By Xiaochen, China

I have always been prone to illness. I was diagnosed with aplastic anemia at the age of 11, so my immune system is very poor. I am physically weak, lacking strength throughout my entire body, and walking more than a short distance tires me out. I am basically bedridden when my condition is serious. My doctor said that I could pick up an infection at those times due to low immunity, resulting in a prolonged fever. He also said that the bleeding might not stop if I were wounded, which could be life-threatening. After accepting Almighty God's work in the last days, my condition improved, and I also took on a duty in the church. Many years passed, and I experienced no symptoms of illness. I was very grateful to God.

Later, I began doing video production work. I felt very honored, as the church's films and videos were testifying to God's work, and doing this work was especially meaningful. At the same time, I thought that if I worked hard to expend myself for God and made good videos testifying to God, a share in these critical good deeds would be mine. This way I would gain God's protection and would surely be saved and survive the great disasters. So, I worked hard on my professional skills and principles, and strove to produce more videos testifying to God. Every time a finished video came out and I saw a segment that I had helped to produce, I was full of joy and felt even more motivated to do my duty. To produce even better work, I threw myself into research and developing my skills, and I discussed things with my brothers and sisters, sometimes until three in the morning. Weak as I was, staying up so late was a bit too much for my body. But then I thought, "I haven't had any health problems for the past few years, and I'm only staying up late like this to better perform my duty. Also,

I've been reasonably effective, so I am sure that God will protect me. As long as I achieve good outcomes and make a sizeable contribution in my duty, I have great hope for salvation. It will be worth it, even if it means suffering more now."

One day, my supervisor told me, "Xiaochen, your health is not great. Our workload is very heavy right now, and we worry that if you go on like this you might have a relapse. Why not go for a checkup at the hospital? If everything is fine, you can continue doing your duty. And if not, take some time to recuperate and do what you can while receiving treatment." I was in a state of agitation after hearing this. I thought, "This is a critical time for us, and my brothers and sisters are busy with their duties. If it turns out I've got a serious health issue, then I won't be able to perform my duty anymore. Could I still be saved?" I felt somewhat negative at this thought. So I prayed to God, asking Him to enlighten me so that I could know His intention, understand my own corrupt disposition, and submit to His orchestrations and arrangements.

I read these words of God: **"These days, most people are in this sort of state: In order to gain blessings, I must expend myself for God and pay a price for Him. In order to gain blessings, I must abandon everything for God; I must complete what He has entrusted me with, and I must perform my duty well. This state is dominated by the intention to gain blessings, which is an example of expending oneself for God entirely for the purpose of obtaining rewards from Him and gaining a crown. Such people do not have the truth in their hearts, and it is certain that their understanding merely consists of a few words and doctrines which they show off everywhere they go. Theirs is the path of Paul. The faith of such people is an act of constant toil, and deep down they feel that the more they do, the more it will prove their**

loyalty to God; that the more they do, the more He will certainly be satisfied; and that the more they do, the more they will deserve to be granted a crown before God, and the greater the blessings they gain will be. They think that if they can endure suffering, preach, and die for Christ, if they can sacrifice their own lives, and if they can complete all of the duties with which God has entrusted them, then they will be those who gain the greatest blessings, and they will be certain to be granted crowns. This is precisely what Paul imagined and what he sought. This is the exact path that he walked, and it was under the guidance of such thoughts that he worked to serve God. Do those thoughts and intentions not originate from a satanic nature? It is just like worldly humans, who believe that while on earth they must pursue knowledge, and that after obtaining it they can stand out from the crowd, become officials, and have status. They think that once they have status, they can realize their ambitions and bring their businesses and family practices up to a certain level of prosperity. Do not all nonbelievers walk this path? Those who are dominated by this satanic nature can only be like Paul in their faith. They think: 'I must cast off everything to expend myself for god. I must be loyal before god, and eventually, I will receive great rewards and great crowns.' This is the same attitude as that of worldly people who pursue worldly things. They are no different at all, and they are subject to the same nature. When people have this sort of satanic nature, out in the world, they will seek to obtain knowledge, learning, status, and to stand out from the crowd. If they believe in God, they will seek to obtain great crowns and great blessings. If people do not pursue the truth when they believe in God, they are sure to take this path. This is an immutable fact, it is a natural law. The path that people who do not pursue the truth take is

**diametrically opposed to that of Peter”** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. How to Walk the Path of Peter). God’s words revealed my state precisely. I thought that enduring hardship, paying a price to make good-quality videos, and making my contribution to spreading the kingdom gospel, ensured that I would be praised and blessed by God, and that in the end I would be rewarded and saved. To this end, I endured late nights without complaint, but when it appeared that I might not be able to carry on for health reasons, I felt my desire to be blessed shattered, so my will to perform my duty was gone—I didn’t want to give any more of myself. I realized that my belief in God had always been transactional. I worked hard to produce good videos so that the church would give me an important role, and I could ask for grace and blessings from God. I always said I was willing to suffer and expend myself for God, but it was only to obtain His blessings. I was cheating and using God. My intentions were despicable! Thinking of this, I realized I could no longer keep on resisting this situation, but I needed to submit. I had to seek the truth and address my corrupt dispositions and the impurities in my belief in God.

After that, I went for an examination at the hospital. The blood tests showed various indicators were lower than they ought to be, and my platelet count was well below normal. The doctor said that without proper care, even a minor lesion could lead to serious hemorrhaging. My supervisor, brothers, and sisters suggested I convalesce for a while and continue with my duty after recovering my health. So, I went home for treatment, returning periodically for more checkups. Things still hadn’t improved after several months and I was getting anxious, so I went to see an old TCM doctor for medication. He said, “Your recovery will be a slow process. Your health is poor, and it will take quite a while to get better.” This was extremely disappointing for me. I had thought that my condition would

improve after going home for treatment, and I could return to video work. I had already undergone almost a year of treatment, so why wasn't I getting better? That year, God's house produced many movies and videos, but because of my health I couldn't take part. I feared I wouldn't be able to perform this duty in the future. Without enough good deeds, could I still be saved when God's work ends? The more I thought about this, the more negative I became. On the way home I felt helpless and desolate, and couldn't help but complain, "Why am I sick like this when my brothers and sisters are in good health?" I felt very hard done by. Nothing could lift my spirits when I got home. I thought, "This is just how my body is. I can't change this situation no matter how hard I try. If I can't take part in important work, what hope do I have of being saved?" I started to completely give up on myself. Every day, I passed the time watching secular movies and TV, and chatting with people online. My relationship with God grew distant, and my heart grew darker and emptier. One day, I suddenly realized, "Isn't this state I'm in the same as being a nonbeliever? How is this anything like being a believer? If I continue down this road I'll only become more and more depraved, and eventually God will eliminate me." This thought finally struck some fear into my heart. I knew I couldn't go on like this anymore, but I had to properly reflect and seek the truth to solve my problems.

In my seeking, I read a passage of God's words: **"When people are unable to accept the truth it is the most rebellious thing, and they are in the most danger. If they are never able to accept the truth, then they are disbelievers. If the desire of a person such as this to be blessed is shattered, they will leave God. Why is this? (Because what they pursue is to be blessed and enjoy grace.) They believe in God but do not pursue the truth. To them, salvation is an ornament and a nice-sounding word.**



**What their heart pursues is rewards, a crown, and desirable things—they want to get a hundred times this in this life, and want to get eternal life in the world to come. If they cannot get these things, then they will not believe; their true face will emerge, and they will leave God. What they believe in in their heart is not God's work, nor is it the truths God expresses, and what they pursue is not salvation, let alone to do their duty as a created being well; rather, it is the same as Paul—to be richly blessed, hold great power, wear a large crown, and be on the same level as God. These are their ambitions and desires. Therefore, every time there is some benefit or desirable thing in God's house, they fight to get hold of it, start ranking people according to their qualifications and seniority, and ruminate, 'I am qualified. I should have a share of this. I must fight to get it.' They put themselves in a foremost place in God's house, then think it is only fitting that they enjoy these benefits of God's house. ... It is clear that his heart was already filled with these things he pursued, and it is sufficient to show that the things he pursued are completely incompatible with the truth. No matter how much work he did, his goal and intent was none other than to get a crown—like Paul's goal and intent was—and he clung to it tightly and never gave up. No matter how the truth was fellowshiped to him, no matter how he was pruned, exposed and dissected, he still stubbornly hung on to the intent to be blessed and would not let it go. When he did not receive God's approval and saw that his desire to be blessed was shattered, he became negative and retreated, abandoned his duty and ran away. He had not truly fulfilled his duty or rendered good service in spreading the gospel of the kingdom, and this fully reveals that he did not have true faith in God, did not truly submit, and did not have an ounce of true experiential testimony—he was just a**

**wolf in sheep's clothing that lurked in a herd of sheep. Ultimately, a person who was a disbeliever to the bone was thoroughly revealed and eliminated, and his life as a believer came to an end"** (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Nine (Part Five)). God's words completely revealed the despicable intentions within me. Although I agreed to go home to recuperate, in my heart, I still hoped to recover quickly and start participating in video production again. I thought, I needed to do more of my duty if I wanted to have a good prospect of being saved. When I didn't get my desired results after multiple treatments, I felt there was no more chance for me to do an important duty, any hope of being blessed was utterly shattered, and I had no motivation to believe in God anymore. I felt that God was being unfair to me; I felt lost and off balance, so I started to give up. I didn't want to eat or drink God's words anymore, and I had no interest in prayer. I even vented my dissatisfaction with God by pursuing worldly trends. I saw that I had faith and did my duty only to gain blessings. When that didn't happen, I became hostile to God and displayed nothing but a satanic disposition. I had no conscience or sense at all. This proved that all my previous effort was insincere and meant to deceive God. In all my years of faith, God had provided me with so much truth and bestowed such grace upon me. Without God's protection, my health would have been ruined long before, but not only did I fail to thank and repay God, I complained. I was completely unreasonable and lacked humanity! Thinking of this filled me with remorse and hatred for myself. I wanted to truly address my motives to gain blessings and stop rebelling against God, so I prayed, asking God to enlighten me to know myself.

Then I read this passage of God's words: **"Since being blessed is not an appropriate objective for people to pursue, what is an appropriate objective? The pursuit of the truth, the pursuit of changes in**

**disposition, and being able to submit to all of God's orchestrations and arrangements: these are the objectives that people should pursue. Say, for example, being pruned causes you to have notions and misunderstandings, and you become incapable of submission. Why can't you submit? Because you feel that your destination or your dream of being blessed has been challenged. You become negative and upset, and try to get out of doing your duty. What is the reason for this? There is a problem with your pursuit. So how should this be solved? It is imperative that you immediately abandon these mistaken ideas, and that you immediately seek the truth to solve the problem of your corrupt disposition. You should say to yourself, 'I must not quit, I must still do well the duty that a created being ought to, and put aside my desire to be blessed.' When you relinquish the desire to be blessed and you walk the path of pursuing the truth, a weight is lifted off your shoulders. And will you still be capable of negativity? Even though there are still times when you are negative, you don't let this constrain you, and in your heart, you keep praying and fighting, changing the objective of your pursuit from the pursuit of being blessed and having a destination, to the pursuit of the truth, and you think to yourself, 'The pursuit of the truth is the duty of a created being. To understand certain truths today—there is no greater harvest, this is the greatest blessing of all. Even if God does not want me, and I do not have a good destination, and my hopes of being blessed are shattered, I shall still do my duty properly, I am obligated to. Whatever the reason, it will not impact my performance of my duty, it will not affect my accomplishment of God's commission; this is the principle by which I conduct myself.' And in this, have you not transcended the constraints of the flesh?" (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Only in the**

Practice of the Truth Is There Life Entry). Reading this allowed me to understand why I complained, became negative, and even gave up on myself when my hope of being blessed was shattered. The root of the problem was my mistaken view of pursuit. I was pursuing blessings and a good destination, so the moment I lost hope of that, I became too negative to go on. My desire for blessings was simply too strong. However, I am a created being, and no matter whether I receive blessings and have a good destination or not, I should do my duty all the same. Even if I don't gain blessings, as long as I fulfill my responsibilities and duty, at least I won't have any regrets. This thought was enlightening for me. I had to practice in accordance with the path pointed out in God's words, let go of my desire for blessings, change my mistaken views of pursuit, and fulfill whatever duty I was capable of. Even if my condition deteriorated someday, I couldn't blame God. This is the reason that a created being should possess. I couldn't do other duties now, but I could practice writing articles at home, writing out my experiences and knowledge to share with my brothers and sisters at gatherings. That way, I was still doing my part. Doing this was a big relief for me.

A year later, when I went to the hospital for some medication, the doctor said, "You've recovered and you don't need to take medication anymore. Just be more mindful of your health and don't wear yourself out." Hearing the doctor say that was so exciting for me, and I was thanking God over and over. Afterward, I read this in God's words: **"I decide the destination of each person not on the basis of age, seniority, amount of suffering, and least of all, the degree to which they invite pity, but according to whether they possess the truth. There is no other choice but this"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Prepare Sufficient Good Deeds for Your Destination). Exactly. God determines people's outcome based on

whether they possess the truth, and those who are ultimately unable to gain the truth cannot be saved. If I don't pursue the truth or dispositional change in my faith, and if my corrupt dispositions are not purified in the end, then I can't be saved no matter how much I contribute or expend myself. But I wanted to deceive God into giving me blessings and grace through hard work. Isn't that sheer nonsense? It was nothing but my wishful thinking! On the surface, it seemed I lost the chance to perform my duty because of illness, but my mistaken views and corrupt disposition were revealed through my ill health, allowing me to turn back in time and start focusing on pursuing the truth. This was God's great protection and salvation for me. This left me with a great sense of remorse and indebtedness, so I prayed, "God! I want to change my fallacious views of pursuit. I don't want to pursue blessings and rewards anymore. No matter what duty I do in the future, I wish to pursue the truth, pursue dispositional change, and fulfill my duty to satisfy You."

After that, I read some of God's words about how to approach my duty that opened my eyes. God's words say: **"To perform your duty adequately, it does not matter how many years you have believed in God, how many duties you have performed, nor how many contributions you have made to God's house, much less does it matter how experienced you are in your duty. The main thing God looks at is the path a person takes. In other words, He looks at one's attitude toward the truth and the principles, direction, origin, and starting point behind one's actions. God focuses on these things; they are what determine the path you walk"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. What Is the Adequate Performance of Duty?). **"Man thinks that all those who make a contribution to God should receive a reward, and that the greater the contribution, the more it is taken for granted that they**

should receive God's favor. The essence of man's viewpoint is transactional, and he does not actively seek to perform his duty as a created being. For God, the more that people seek a true love for God and complete submission to God, which also means seeking to perform their duty as a created being, the more they are able to gain God's approval. God's viewpoint is to demand that man recover his original duty and status. Man is a created being, and so man should not overstep himself by making any demands of God, and should do nothing more than perform his duty as a created being. The destinations of Paul and Peter were measured according to whether they could fulfill their duty as created beings, and not according to the size of their contribution; their destinations were determined according to that which they sought from the beginning, not according to how much work they did, or other people's estimation of them. And so, seeking to actively perform one's duty as a created being is the path to success; seeking the path of the true love for God is the most correct path; seeking changes in one's old disposition, and seeking the pure love for God, is the path to success. Such a path to success is the path of the recovery of the original duty as well as the original appearance of a created being. It is the path of recovery, and it is also the aim of all of **God's work from beginning to end**" (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Success or Failure Depends on the Path That Man Walks). After reading God's words, I saw that there really is no distinction between high or low in people's duties. Whether people can be saved doesn't depend on what duty they do, or how great their work is. As long as you pursue the truth, fulfill the duty of a created being, and achieve a transformation in your life disposition, you can be saved by God. It is the responsibility of created beings to do a duty. Every person ought to be doing this. It is not a tool for personal

benefit, nor is it a bargaining chip for rewards. Regardless of whether I am blessed or not, I should fulfill my duty. After that, the church arranged a suitable duty for me based on my physical condition.

Now, I am no longer constantly worried about whether I will have a good future and destination. I know that no matter what duty I perform, understanding and gaining the truth is the most important thing. Whether I have a good outcome in the future or not, as long as I can fulfill my responsibilities in my duty, I feel at ease and at peace. Thank God!

## 66. A Doctor's Repentance

By Yang Fan, China

When I started practicing medicine, I always strove hard to be kind and professional. Moreover, I treated people well, and made accurate diagnoses. Before long, I'd earned the trust of everyone in our neighborhood. Years later, I discovered my peers had all bought cars and were living in big houses, but my family still lived in our old bungalow, and I still rode a bicycle. My twin sons were growing up fast and there was so much to pay for, but I still didn't have much money. When I thought about our finances, I couldn't eat or sleep. I wondered: "Why is it that I'm barely managing to scrape by, but all these other doctors make so much money?"

One time, I was chatting with some of my peers, friends of mine. I asked them how they managed to make so much money. Doctor Sun said, "The central authorities have said: 'It doesn't matter whether a cat is white or black, as long as it can catch mice, it is a good cat.' Money is everything in today's society. Earning money is a skill in itself. But if you let your conscience get in the way, you'll be poor your whole life!" The other one, Doctor Li, said: "If you want to earn more, you need to retain patients. While you're treating them, give them some hormones. It'll heal them quickly, and the patients will be satisfied. You'll get a good reputation, more patients will come, and you'll get more money." Another doctor, Doctor Jin, said: "'There is another trick: treating small illnesses with big cures.' If someone comes in with a cough caused by a cold, the normal cure won't make you much money. Treat it like it's pneumonia. The treatment will work, you'll earn more money, and the patient will be satisfied too. Everyone's a winner." Hearing that they all had their own ways of making money, I was rather alarmed. Making money off patients like this, without



conscience, was this medically ethical? Was this how doctors should conduct themselves? Was this not really low-down behavior? But I also thought about the big houses they lived in, the nice cars they drove, and how confidently they all spoke. Whereas I was still riding around on a bicycle, and was so poor. If I didn't do as they said, then how was I going to earn more money? When was I going to be able to give my family a good life? Besides, it seemed like everyone was this way. Even if I kept practicing medicine ethically, I couldn't change society. With the promise of more money, I began to ignore my conscience and decided to try out the methods that my peers had taught me. I overtreated patients and sold them excessive medications to make more money.

One day, a patient came in with a toothache. It was gingivitis, which could have been treated with some cheap medicine. But I thought of what Doctor Jin had said: "Treat small illnesses with big cures." So, I prescribed both Western and traditional Chinese medicine, and some intramuscular injections. I was afraid the patient would refuse so much medicine, so I feigned compassion and said: "It's a lot of medicine, but it'll treat the root of your symptoms." The patient just clutched his cheek and nodded, then paid the money and left without a word. Watching him as he left, the anxiety I'd felt began to slowly ease up. Though I was a little uneasy, I'd made a lot more money than usual, and that feeling soon went away. Another time, a mother came in with her five-year-old son. He'd caught a cold and was coughing, so he only needed a few days' worth of cheap medicine. But then I remembered that this kind of treatment wouldn't make me much money. So, I said to the child's mother: "Your son has tracheitis. He needs an IV drip right away, or it'll turn into pneumonia." She was shocked, but she believed everything I told her without question, and I put her son on an IV drip for four days. I saw that the money I was making was

several times more than what I used to make. I felt uneasy, but, again, I thought about what the other doctors had said, “Conscience cannot pay the bills or buy you food. If you listen to it, you’ll always be poor.” When I thought about what they’d told me, my feelings of unease disappeared. In this society, you have to deceive people to get rich. I had no other choice. Later, a patient with chronic bronchitis came to see me. Her condition only required her to keep taking some simple medicine. But, of course, that wouldn’t earn me much money. So, I told her: “You need to be put on an IV, otherwise it could turn into emphysema, which in severe cases can cause heart disease.” With my encouragement, she was happy to go on an IV for seven days. I remember that on the last day of the treatment, she took my hand in hers and said: “Thank you, Doctor. It’s thanks to you that this was treated in time. I feel much better now. If this had turned into emphysema or heart disease, I really would have suffered.” Hearing this pricked my conscience, and my face burned bright red. But again, I thought: “In this society, who doesn’t lie or cheat? Earning money is a skill in itself.” Thinking this, the unease I felt began to evaporate. In this way, I mired myself deeper and deeper in my pursuit of money. After a few years, I’d made a lot of money. I had a bigger house, my children were married, and life was good. But I often felt pained and guilty. I was in a constant state of anxiety. I worried that someone had found out what I’d been doing and was telling everyone behind my back. This thought was hard to bear.

One day, a sister in our village preached Almighty God’s kingdom gospel to me, and I started reading God’s words often. Once, at a gathering, we read a passage of God’s words about being an honest person: **“You ought to know that God likes those who are honest. In essence, God is faithful, and so His words can always be trusted; His actions, furthermore, are faultless and unquestionable, which is why God likes**

**those who are absolutely honest with Him. Honesty means giving your heart to God, being genuine with God in all things, being open with Him in all things, never hiding the facts, not trying to deceive those above and below you, and not doing things only to curry favor with God. In short, to be honest is to be pure in your actions and words, and to deceive neither God nor man. What I say is very simple, but to you it is doubly arduous. Many people would rather be condemned to hell than speak and act honestly. Little wonder that I have other treatment in store for those who are dishonest. ... How one's fate will work out in the end hinges upon whether they have an honest and blood-red heart, and whether they have a pure soul. If you are someone who is very dishonest, someone with a heart of malice, someone with an unclean soul, then you are sure to end up in the place where man is punished, as is written in the record of your fate. If you claim to be very honest, and yet never manage to act in accordance with the truth or to speak a word of truth, then are you still waiting for God to reward you? Do you still hope for God to regard you as the apple of His eye? Is such thinking not preposterous? You deceive God in all things; how could the house of God accommodate one such as you, whose hands are unclean?"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Three Admonitions).

Reading God's words, I understood that God's essence is faithful, and He likes honest people. God asks us to accept His scrutiny in our speech and actions, and not lie to God or to others. We must be honest and trustworthy, because only such people can be saved and enter God's kingdom. Thinking about what God requires of us, I thought about how, as a doctor, I hadn't considered how to cure my patients or ease their suffering, but about how I could earn more money for myself. To earn more money, I had even tricked patients when treating them. I'd exploited people's fears, making trivial

conditions out to be serious and using that to peddle expensive medications and prolong treatment. I'd made them waste their money, but they'd still thanked me for it. This was despicable, shameful behavior! Even though I'd made a comfortable living by doing this, I was constantly paranoid and on edge, and I couldn't relax. I'd conducted myself totally without conscience. God's words showed me that God hated people who lied and deceived others, and that these people would not meet a good ending. Only honest people can receive God's praise and His salvation. From then on, I desired to be an honest person. I decided that I would never cheat anyone again, that I would stop defrauding patients out of money. I wanted to practice medicine honorably and honestly.

A while later, I realized that, since I'd stopped conning and overtreating patients, my income was a lot lower. At the time, the governing hospital's performance was tied to our clinics' medicine sales. One day, the hospital ordered a performance evaluation meeting. The chairman accused me of dragging the hospital down, and took down the plaque which labeled us as an "advanced clinic." The hospital had started giving out incentives to its staff. For example, if a doctor managed to exceed their monthly quotas of medicine sales, fifty percent of the surplus income would be given to them as a commission. If I went back to overtreating patients, I'd end up getting over 4,000 yuan extra each month, which meant I could earn an extra 50,000 yuan every year. But, if I didn't resume overtreating patients, I'd never hit the targets assigned for us, and I'd lose out on a lot of money. The more I thought about it, the more I felt like being an honest person was impossible in my line of work, and that if I didn't trick people, I wouldn't make any money. After this, I went against what God required of me. I ignored my conscience and went back to my old ways.

One day, a married couple brought their son in to see me. He'd caught a cold, which had led to a respiratory infection, and could be cured with some medicine. Feigning concern, I took out my stethoscope and listened to the child's chest and back. After this mock examination, I said to the parents, very sternly: "Your child has pediatric pneumonia. It's already spread. You should have come in sooner! A day later and he would've been in real trouble! Luckily, there's still time. We'll put him on an IV drip for a few days, and he'll be fine." Just like that, I was back to cajoling patients out of their money. I'd deliberately made the child's illness seem severe. Later on, I reproached myself. I was scared that what I'd done would be exposed, so I spent every day on edge. Sometimes, I'd tell myself that this was the last time, and after that I'd stop. But I couldn't resist the temptation of money, and I could never stop myself from committing these sins. My life became a struggle. I knew that God demands for us to be honest people, but I couldn't control myself or stop from conning my patients.

Later, I read Almighty God's words: **"Born into such a filthy land, man has been severely blighted by society, he has been influenced by feudal ethics, and he has been taught at 'institutes of higher learning.'** The backward thinking, corrupt morality, mean view on life, despicable philosophy for worldly dealings, utterly worthless existence, and depraved lifestyle and customs—all of these things have severely intruded upon man's heart, and severely undermined and attacked his conscience. As a result, man is ever more distant from God, and ever more opposed to Him. Man's disposition becomes more vicious by the day, and there is not a single person who will willingly give up anything for God, not a single person who will willingly submit to God, nor, moreover, a single person who will willingly seek the appearance of God. Instead, under the power of Satan, man does nothing but pursue

**pleasure, giving himself over to the corruption of the flesh in the land of mud. Even when they hear the truth, those who live in darkness give no thought to putting it into practice, nor are they inclined to seek out God even if they have beheld His appearance. How could a mankind so depraved have any chance of salvation? How could a mankind so decadent live in the light?”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. To

Have an Unchanged Disposition Is to Be in Enmity to God). **“After several thousand years of corruption, man is numb and dull-witted; he has become a demon that opposes God, to the extent that man’s rebelliousness toward God has been documented in the books of history, and even man himself is incapable of giving a full account of his rebellious behavior—for man has been profoundly corrupted by Satan, and has been led astray by Satan such that he knows not where to turn. Even today, man still betrays God: When man sees God, he betrays Him, and when he cannot see God, so too does he betray Him. There are even those who, having witnessed God’s curses and God’s wrath, still betray Him. And so I say that man’s sense has lost its original function, and that man’s conscience, too, has lost its original function”** (The Word, Vol. 1.

The Appearance and Work of God. To Have an Unchanged Disposition Is to Be in Enmity to God). God’s words revealed to me that the society we live in has been corrupted by Satan. “No wealth is without wiliness,” “Money is first,” and “Every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost”—these philosophies for worldly dealings that are popular in society all come from Satan. Influenced and poisoned by these views, our outlooks, and values of life become twisted. We place money above everything. We abandon conscience and morality for the sake of maximizing our own benefits. We lie and cheat, becoming more and more selfish, deceitful, greedy and vicious, losing more and more of our humanity. A doctor’s duty is to cure their patients and

practice medical ethics, and they cannot lose the bottom line of human conscience. But, under the spell of money, most doctors overtreat patients and overprescribe medicines, even tricking them into taking hormones. Although the patients can't see the danger at first, using too much medicine and hormone treatment over time will severely damage their bodies. The toxins in the medicine will build up in their bodies, and will often cause chronic diseases. It's a form of slow murder. The more I thought about this, the more scared I became. When I'd been studying medicine, I'd originally wanted to help ordinary people. But under the control of the satanic views of "Every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost," "Money is first," and "It doesn't matter whether a cat is white or black, as long as it can catch mice, it is a good cat," I started to desperately pursue money. I turned three-day illnesses into five-day ones, just to make money. I would prescribe more expensive medicines than the patients needed. Satan had truly corrupted me to the point where I'd lost all my conscience and reason. After accepting God's work in the last days, I knew that God required that we be honest people. But I still couldn't withstand the allure of money or personal gain, and, once again, I continued to cheat my patients. Satan's poisons had become a part of my very nature. If I hadn't read God's words and seen the hatefulness and danger of my lies, I would have continued living as a fraud. I would have been anxious and remorseful my whole life, and I would have gone to hell and been punished for my evil behavior. I finally understood how important it is that God asks us to be honest. Being honest and doing honest deeds gives us integrity and dignity. Being honest was the only way to receive God's praise and put our hearts at rest. Once I understood God's intention, I prayed to Him. I was willing to start anew, to rebel against myself, to practice the truth, and be an honest person.

One day, a patient from another village came to see me. After a careful examination, I determined that he had a venous leg ulcer. This is commonly referred to as “leg rot.” It’s stubborn and hard to treat, but I knew a secret treatment that would clear it right up at a low cost of just a few dimes in yuan. The patient told me he’d been to see county doctors, as well as a few quacks, and had spent thousands of yuan to no avail. Hearing this, I started thinking: “He’s already spent thousands of yuan without being cured, so if I charged him a few hundred for the cure, that wouldn’t be so bad, right? It would be a shame to let this money go to waste.” As I thought this, my heart leapt. “I’ll cheat just this last person, and from then on, I’ll be honest.” But, as I prepared to give him the prescription, I thought of the resolution I’d made before God. I started to pray to God: “Dear God, I still have the urge to lie. I know I can’t keep betraying my promise and letting You down. Oh God, please, help me to put my personal interests aside and be an honest person.” A passage of God’s words then came to mind: **“People who genuinely believe in God always have Him in their hearts, and they always carry within them a God-fearing heart, a God-loving heart. Those who believe in God should do things cautiously and prudently, and all that they do should be in accordance with God’s requirements and able to satisfy His heart. They should not be headstrong, doing whatever they please; that does not befit saintly propriety”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. A Warning to Those Who Do Not Practice the Truth). This passage of God’s words showed me that true believers have God-fearing hearts, are honest and dependable. They do things openly, accepting God’s scrutiny, and they don’t deceive others. They do everything with saintly propriety, and conduct themselves in accordance with God’s requirements. They don’t do things that would dishonor God. I was so thankful for the guidance and enlightenment of God, and inside I prayed to God once more:



“Oh God! Before, I lied and cheated for the sake of money, and I lived out the likeness of Satan. But from today, I want to be an honest person, and humiliate Satan.” After praying, I said earnestly to the patient: “Although this illness is hard to treat, I have a prescription that I guarantee will cure you. And it barely costs anything.” If this had happened before, this kind of prescription would have been many times this amount. But now God’s words had given me the confidence to practice the truth, to be an honest and upstanding person. I wasn’t going to cheat people out of their money anymore. When the patient left with his medicine, I was so incredibly happy and at peace inside. Ten days later, the patient returned, and said with gratitude: “I’d been everywhere to get a treatment for this disease, but I had no luck. I didn’t even use all of the medicine you gave me, and my wound’s healed! It’s a miracle cure! Thank you, so much! I’m going to tell everyone I know about you. Not only are you highly skilled, you’re affordable too.” When I heard these words I felt extremely grateful to God, and I knew that this small change in me was because I’d been guided by God’s words.

I remembered how I used to think: “Money is first,” “No wealth is without wiliness,” and “Every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost.” In thrall to these poisons, I lost my conscience, my integrity, and my morals. I became blackhearted. The words and salvation of God restored my conscience and my reason, and helped me find the principles of conduct. From then on, I conscientiously treated every patient who came to see me. I gave them only what they needed, and was honest about their condition. I kept my standard of being honest. After a while practicing this way, I felt really grounded, at peace, and free from anxiety. Also, a lot of the now healthy patients I had treated told others about their experience with me. People from all the surrounding villages wanted me to treat them. I learned that only telling the truth and being honest makes one a person

with a true human likeness. Rejecting lies and telling the truth was the first step to being an honest person, and I know I still have to work hard in accordance with God's requirements, and seek to be a truly honest person.

## 67. How to Face Difficulties Sharing the Gospel

By Kelvin, Peru

My whole family was Catholic, and so were most of the other people in our village, but as the Catholic church there didn't have a priest presiding over it, for a long time no one went to church to study the Bible. On May 22, 2020, I read the words of Almighty God online, and through His words, I became certain that the Lord Jesus has returned, that He's Christ of the last days, Almighty God, and I happily accepted His work of the last days. Later on, I read this in Almighty God's words: **"Since man believes in God, he must closely follow the footsteps of God, step-by-step; he should 'follow the Lamb wherever He goes.' Only these are the people who seek the true way, only they are the ones who know the work of the Holy Spirit"**

(The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. God's Work and Man's Practice). I knew that as believers, we should know God's work and follow God's footsteps. There were so many believers in the village, but none of them had heard God's voice or welcomed the return of the Lord Jesus, so I really wanted to share this incredible news with them. But I was a little afraid. I felt that as I was young and didn't know how to share the gospel, they definitely wouldn't listen to me. I was worried they'd look down on me and say, "You're so young. Why run around preaching, instead of going to school or getting a job?" Besides, they'd been believers for years, so would they listen to my testimony of the Lord Jesus' return? How would they treat me? How could I fellowship to resolve any notions or confusions they might have? What would I do if they were opposed to me believing in Almighty God and sharing the gospel? I gave it a lot of thought, but I knew that spreading the gospel was God's intention. I had to share the gospel with them and testify to God.

So I prayed to God, and through reading Almighty God's words, my faith was strengthened. I read this in His words: **"Are you aware of the burden on your shoulders, your commission, and your responsibility? Where is your sense of historic mission? How will you adequately serve as a master in the next age? Do you have a strong sense of masterhood? How would you explain the master of all things? Is it really the master of all living creatures and of all physical things in the world? What plans do you have for the progress of the next phase of the work? How many people are waiting for you to be their shepherd? Is your task a heavy one? They are poor, pitiable, blind, and at a loss, wailing in the darkness—where is the way? How they yearn for the light, like a shooting star, to suddenly descend and dispel the forces of darkness that have oppressed man for so many years. Who can know the full extent to which they anxiously hope, and how they pine, day and night, for this? Even on a day when the light flashes past, these deeply suffering people remain imprisoned in a dark dungeon without hope of release; when will they weep no longer? Terrible is the misfortune of these fragile spirits who have never been granted rest, and long have they been kept bound in this state by merciless bonds and frozen history. And who has heard the sound of their wailing? Who has looked upon their miserable state? Has it ever occurred to you how grieved and anxious God's heart is? How can He bear to see innocent mankind, whom He created with His own hands, suffering such torment? Human beings, after all, are the victims who have been poisoned. And although man has survived to this day, who would have known that mankind has long been poisoned by the evil one? Have you forgotten that you are one of the victims? Are you not willing to strive, out of your love for God, to save these survivors? Are you not willing to devote all of your**

**energy to repaying God, who loves mankind like His own flesh and blood? When all is said and done, how would you interpret being used by God to live your extraordinary life? Do you really have the resolve and confidence to live the meaningful life of a pious, God-serving person?”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. How Should You Attend to Your Future Mission?). I understood that sharing the gospel is our duty. Lots of people still haven't heard God's voice and have even less idea that the Lord has returned and that He is doing the work of judging and purifying people. They are still living in Satan's corruption and misery. God hopes that all of us can consider His intention and stand up and cooperate with Him. No matter what issues or difficulties we face, we can pray and lean on God more, and do everything we can to spread the kingdom gospel. But I didn't understand God's intention—I felt that being so young, I couldn't share the gospel. I was afraid the villagers wouldn't listen to me and would look down on me, so I was caught between these difficulties and my own imagination, burdened with worries. I only thought about my own hardships without considering God's intention, and I didn't think to pray and lean on God through these struggles, to fulfill my duty and responsibility. When I thought about how lots of people were longing for the Lord's return and to be saved from darkness, I felt a sense of urgency. I resolved to do everything I could to spread and bear testimony to God's gospel of the last days and to put all my time and energy into this work.

After that, I started making plans to share the gospel with the people in my village. First, I went to the copy shop to print out some invitations for ten families to hear a sermon at my house. They were all pretty surprised, and had nice things to say about what I was doing. I was so happy. Later, I thought, “If lots of people come this evening, it'll be hard for everyone to read God's words with just my little cellphone while they're listening to the

sermon.” So, I went to ask a friend to borrow his laptop. That evening, 13 people came to hear the sermon, and during the gathering they all enjoyed reading God’s words, whoever wanted to read would just stand up and volunteer. Everyone was really happy afterward. They said that God’s words were wonderful and that they’d gained a lot from reading them. They said it was great to be able to gather together to read them and they even wanted to bring their family members over the next day to hear His words too. Seeing how everyone longed for God’s words made me really happy. But then I realized that it wasn’t viable to keep borrowing my friend’s laptop. I wanted to buy one of my own but when I put together all of my money it still wasn’t enough. I was in a bit of a quandary. After asking around, I learned that projectors are a little cheaper than computers and I decided to take out a loan to buy one so the other villagers could read God’s words that way. I went to town to take out the loan, and I bought a projector. I got everything set up before starting the next gathering and not long after the villagers started showing up. 19 people attended, filling up the entire room. In that moment I saw that God had arranged all of this, and I was so excited. I rushed to find a speaker so everyone could listen to God’s words. We fellowshiped the truth on how the prophecies of the Lord’s return have been fulfilled, how to welcome Him, how to be sure that the Lord Jesus has returned, and how God’s judgment work of the last days would expose every type of person. The people in attendance all participated enthusiastically in reading God’s words, and some of the kids were also excited to read them. Seeing how much they yearned for His words, I knew this was all God’s doing. A few people lingered after the gathering wrapped up, and said that they’d really enjoyed listening. Some people had been very moved, including the head of the village, who wanted to get all the villagers to come and listen to God’s words. It was such a

pleasant surprise. This outcome had totally shattered my notions and imaginings and I felt ashamed. I had truly witnessed God's work and guidance, and kept gaining more confidence to share the gospel. I invited villagers to listen to sermons every single day after that, and more and more people started showing up. They were all thrilled, and said, "I've never read anything like this before. God has now become flesh and returned and we have come face-to-face with Him. We're so blessed to be able to welcome the Lord." They also planned an event to invite more people from surrounding towns to a gathering. They told me, "You're so young, but you're doing this for the villagers, helping everyone to hear God's words and being so conscientious about it. No one's ever done something like this for us before. We never thought a young person like you could do this—it's wonderful." I knew this was all God's doing, which excited me and made me more confident to spread the gospel.

But I ran into all sorts of difficulties when I was watering these new believers. Sometimes my internet connection wasn't great, and I had to go door-to-door to conduct gatherings. Even worse was that it rained a lot there, and the roads would all turn to mud, making it hard to walk. When I went out to water the newcomers, I had to run from house to house. Sometimes I'd rush to a new believer's house before it started raining, and sometimes I'd have to wait because they hadn't gotten home yet. Then, when the gatherings were over, it wasn't easy to walk home on the rain-soaked roads. Sometimes I'd feel a little negative and weak when I'd worn myself out, so I'd pray and read God's words. At that time, I read this in Almighty God's words: **"Do not be discouraged, do not be weak, and I will make things clear for you. The road to the kingdom is not so smooth; nothing is that simple! You want blessings to come to you easily, do you not? Today, everyone will have bitter trials to face.**

**Without such trials, the loving heart you have for Me will not grow stronger and you will not have true love for Me. Even if these trials consist merely of minor circumstances, everyone must pass through them; it's just that the difficulty of the trials will vary from one person to another. Trials are a blessing from Me, and how many of you come often before Me and beg on your knees for My blessings? Silly children! You always think that a few auspicious words count as My blessing, yet you do not recognize that bitterness is one of My blessings"**

(The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Utterances of Christ in the Beginning, Chapter

41). **"When you face suffering, you must be able to lay aside concern for the flesh and to not make complaints against God. ... No matter what your actual stature is, you must first possess both the will to suffer hardship and true faith, and you must also have the will to rebel against the flesh. You should be willing to endure personal hardships and suffer losses to your personal interests in order to satisfy God's intentions. You must also be capable of feeling regret about yourself in your heart: In the past, you were unable to satisfy God, and now, you can regret yourself. You must not be lacking in any of these regards—it is through these things that God will perfect you. If you cannot meet these criteria, then you cannot be perfected"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance

and Work of God. Those Who Are to Be Made Perfect Must Undergo Refinement). God's words encouraged and comforted me not to lose heart or become weak, and that God would guide and help me. I'd experienced some physical discomfort and paid a bit of a price to share the gospel, but it was meaningful and valuable. It was the most just thing to do, and what would most gain God's approval. I thought of Peter, Matthew, and other apostles of the Lord Jesus who suffered a lot to spread the gospel. Some even died in their efforts to share it, but they stayed strong and never backed down. Compared to them,



what little I'd suffered wasn't even worth mentioning. It was the grace of God that I'd had the good fortune to accept His work of the last days, and could do my duty by spreading the kingdom gospel. I couldn't keep considering my own flesh, and being afraid of a little hardship. I had to be willing to suffer. I couldn't become discouraged in the face of any difficulties. Even if I suffered physical discomfort, I still had to share the gospel, bear witness to God, and fulfill my duty to satisfy Him.

One time, I got sick, and had a cold for several days. In the evenings I had a fever, a headache, and a stomachache. I couldn't even talk. A sister saw I was in bad shape and told me, "You shouldn't go to tonight's gathering." I agreed at the time. But afterward, the thought of leaving new believers to gather by themselves left me uneasy. I was thinking that feeling unwell was a test for me, and I still had to do my duty well. I remembered that I'd still go to play soccer when I was sick or had an injured leg before. So why couldn't I do my duty now? At this thought, I got on my motorcycle and went to the gathering. Surprisingly, when I arrived I didn't feel as unwell. I was really happy and I got better in just a couple days.

After over a month of hard work spreading the gospel, most of the villagers, aside from those who were working out of town, had accepted Almighty God's gospel of the last days. I wanted more people to hear God's voice, because there are still lots of people who don't know that the Lord Jesus has returned, is expressing so many truths, and doing the work of cleansing and saving mankind. So I decided to go share the gospel in other villages. I prayed in my heart, "Almighty God, please guide me so that I don't lose faith and I can keep moving forward. I'm confident that You'll help me resolve whatever difficulties I face." After that, I went to a neighboring village to share the gospel. I walked downhill down a muddy road for 30 minutes to preach the gospel to them, but the first three

households all said they didn't have time, and politely turned me away. I felt really disappointed and kind of discouraged. I got home really late that night. Sister Annie called me to ask about how my gospel sharing had gone, also fellowshipping on God's words with me, encouraging and helping me. I read something in Almighty God's words: **"What I desire is your loyalty and submission now, your love and testimony now. Even if you do not know at this moment what testimony is or what love is, you should bring to Me your all, and turn over to Me the only treasures you have: your loyalty and submission. You should know that the testimony to My defeat of Satan lies within the loyalty and submission of man, as does the testimony to My complete conquest of man. The duty of your faith in Me is to bear witness to Me, to be loyal to Me and none other, and to be submissive to the end. Before I begin the next step of My work, how will you bear witness to Me? How will you be loyal and submissive to Me? Do you devote all your loyalty to your function, or will you simply give up? Would you rather submit to My every arrangement (even if it be death or destruction), or flee midway to avoid My chastisement? I chastise you so that you will bear witness to Me, and be loyal and submissive to Me. What's more, the chastisement at present is to unfold the next step of My work and to allow the work to progress unimpeded. Hence, I exhort you to be wise and treat neither your life nor the significance of your existence as worthless sand. Can you know exactly what My work to come will be? Do you know how I will work in the days to come, and how My work will unfold? You should know the significance of your experience of My work, and furthermore, the significance of your faith in Me. I have done so much; how could I give up halfway, as you imagine? I have done such extensive work; how could I destroy it? Indeed, I have come to bring**

**this age to an end. This is true, but moreover you must know that I am to begin a new age, to begin new work, and, most of all, to spread the gospel of the kingdom. So you should know that the present work is only to begin an age and to lay the foundation for spreading the gospel in the time to come and bringing the age to an end in the future. My work is not so simple as you think, nor is it as worthless or meaningless as you may believe. Therefore, I still must say to you: You ought to give your life to My work, and moreover, you ought to devote yourself to My glory. Long have I yearned for you to bear witness to Me, and even longer have I yearned for you to spread My gospel. You ought to understand what is in My heart”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. What Do You Know of Faith?). Reading this in God’s words gave me some strength. I felt like God was telling me that I should have faith in Him, and no matter what difficulties I faced, I couldn’t be weak or negative, I couldn’t be discouraged or upset, because God is guiding us. As long as I was considerate of God’s intention and went out to spread His kingdom gospel, He would open up a path for me. Through God’s words I saw that sharing the gospel isn’t an easy path, it requires suffering and paying a price. Noah preached the gospel for 120 years and he was mocked, slandered, and maligned by people. He suffered so much, and though he didn’t convert anyone, he still didn’t give up or become weak—he kept sharing the gospel. Noah stayed strong in his devotion and submission to God. He did his duty as a created being and gained God’s approval and blessings. When God sent the flood to destroy the world, Noah’s family of eight were saved by God and survived. Then I thought of myself. I’d just shared the gospel with three families and lost heart when they didn’t accept it. I didn’t have true faith in God. In fact, God had allowed this situation and these difficulties to come upon me to perfect my faith and my devotion to

Him. So whether they accepted the gospel or not, I had to go preach it. That was my duty.

God's words gave me strength. I went to another village the next day to share the gospel. I also said a prayer, asking God to enlighten the potential gospel recipients to understand His words. That evening, I found someone interested in hearing the gospel, and after I fellowshiped and bore witness to him about God's appearance and work, I kept finding others to share the gospel with, and converted six people that night. I was so surprised because some gospel recipients were Catholics and had lots of notions, but after I fellowshiped on God's words with them they could understand, and they accepted Almighty God's gospel of the last days. I went to another place after that, and every time I went out to share the gospel I'd pray, asking God to enlighten and guide me so I would know how to preach and bear witness to His words. As more and more people accepted God's gospel, my faith grew. Though sometimes when I went to other villages to preach to strangers, I felt a little shy and scared, the guidance of God's words gave me confidence and the courage to face it. I knew that this was my duty, and if I didn't share the gospel, I wouldn't get more practice, and I wouldn't learn and gain more truths. After that, by constantly practicing sharing the gospel, I stopped being so nervous and afraid and came to understand the truth of visions more and more clearly. I felt really relaxed and free. I really gained so much through this process of sharing the gospel.

Through sharing the gospel, I experienced so much and encountered a lot of hardship. But I learned to rely on and look up to God in these times, came to know His almighty sovereignty and to also understand the importance of doing my duty.

## 68. The Torture Suffered Behind Bars

By Chen Hao, China

One morning in November of 2004, I went to an elder sister's house to attend a gathering. Just as I was about to knock on the door, the door suddenly opened, and a pair of hands grabbed me and dragged me inside. Staring me down and speaking in a deep, growling register, a man threatened me, saying, "Don't you dare speak!" Another man grabbed me by the throat and kicked me in the shin while asking what I was doing there and how many people would be coming. I realized these men were police and, feeling a bit anxious, said, "I'm just here to deliver water and collect the water bill." One of them said, "You're Chen Hao, aren't you?" I was caught off guard—how did they know my name? Before I had time to react, they started searching me, confiscated a notebook and over 600 yuan from my pockets, and then they put me in handcuffs. I heard someone say, "It wasn't a waste to stake this place out for a month after all." I realized that they had been monitoring the house for quite some time. About five minutes later, three plainclothes police officers arrived. One of them looked at me with surprise and said, "What are you doing here? What are you doing getting mixed up with these people?" This man was named Liu and his little sister was a co-worker of mine when I believed in the Lord Jesus. He was particularly vicious and sinister and he had his subordinates take me away. I thought of how when other brothers and sisters had been arrested previously, they had often been subjected to all manner of torture and some had even been beaten to death, I felt very scared. I didn't know whether the police would torture or even kill me, and so I prayed to God, asking Him to protect me and give me faith and strength to stand firm in my testimony to Him. I then thought of how the Lord Jesus said: **"And fear not them which**

**kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear Him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell**” (Matthew 10:28). That’s right, the police could only kill me physically—they couldn’t rob me of my soul. With the guidance of God’s words, I felt a little less scared.

After that, they brought me to the local police station. Affecting a sincere tone, the man named Liu told the policemen that brought me in, “Don’t be too hard on him. He’s an honest person and we go way back.” Then, with a fake earnestness, he said to me, “Just tell us what you know. A little religious practice is no big deal. If you come clean you can just go home. It’s been over a year since you were last home, right? Think it through. When it comes time, just tell us what we want to know and I guarantee you’ll be fine.” When I heard him say that, I faltered a bit, and thought: “Given that we’re well acquainted and he’s the head of the special investigation team, maybe if I just divulge some less important information and gain his confidence, he’ll let me go.” Just as I was considering this, I suddenly thought of God’s words: **“At all times, My people should be on guard against the cunning schemes of Satan ... so as to avoid falling into Satan’s trap, at which time it would be too late for regrets”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. God’s Words to the Entire Universe, Chapter 3). I realized I had almost fallen for Satan’s cunning plot. This Officer Liu was a crafty and conniving person—how could I believe what he said? He just wanted to get information from me about the church and make me betray God. Having come to this realization, I kept my mouth shut. Then another officer asked me, “Where have you been evangelizing? Who have you been gathering with? Who is your leader? Where does the church keep its money?” But no matter how he grilled me, I didn’t say a single word.

At around 3 p.m. the same day, they transported me to the county detention house. An officer there took me into a room and ordered me to take off all my clothes, raise my arms and then spin around in circles. When I wouldn't start spinning, he gave me a swift kick and then told me to do three deep squats. I felt enraged and humiliated. After that, I was taken to a jail cell crammed with over thirty inmates in a space of less than 20 square meters. As soon as I entered the cell, two inmates twisted my arms behind my back, pulling up and pushing forward to parade me around the room before kicking me to the floor. I hit my forehead on the ground and it began bleeding. The inmates just laughed and one said, "Looks like the airplane didn't put on the brakes." Another said, "We've got a lot to teach you. You'll learn in time." I thought to myself: "I've only just arrived and they're already tormenting me like this. How will I ever survive in here? Will I be able to put up with this?" Inwardly, I prayed to God, beseeching Him to safeguard my heart so that I could stand firm in my testimony. Just then, I thought of God's words, which say: **"It is tremendously difficult for God to carry out His work in the land of the great red dragon—but it is through this difficulty that God does one stage of His work, making manifest His wisdom and His wondrous deeds, and using this opportunity to make this group of people complete. It is through people's suffering, through their caliber, and through all the satanic dispositions of the people of this filthy land that God does His work of purification and conquest, so that, from this, He may gain glory, and so that He may gain those who will bear witness to His deeds. Such is the entire significance of all the sacrifices that God has made for this group of people"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Is the Work of God As Simple As Man Imagines?). Thinking over God's words, I realized that God is using this environment to perfect our faith. It was with God's permission that I had

been arrested and tormented by the police. He hoped that I would stand firm in my testimony for Him to humiliate Satan. It was truly an honor to have the opportunity to testify for God. I thought of how the Lord Jesus was crucified to redeem humanity and how after God incarnated in the last days to save us, He was subject to the pursuit and persecution of the ruling party, the libel and rejection of the religious world and suffered all manner of hardship and humiliation. Yet, despite that, God still expresses the truth and sustains us. What was this little bit of suffering compared to the opportunity to follow God, pursue the truth, and be saved by Him? Realizing this, I felt a bit stronger and thought: “No matter how they torment me, I mustn’t divulge any information about the church or betray God.”

On the morning of the fourth day, the police came to interrogate me again. They grilled me on various details regarding the church and showed me several photographs of people and asked me to identify them, saying that these people had already identified me. I knew this was another of their cunning plots—they wanted to trick me into selling out my brothers and sisters—so I just ignored them. Eventually, seeing that I wasn’t going to say anything, they sent me back and put me in a different cell. As I entered, I heard the officer tell the inmates in the cell, “This one’s a believer. Make sure to ‘take good care’ of him.” Then a young inmate came up to me and said he was going to “clean my ears out” for me. He and another inmate both pulled on my ears in opposite directions. I started trying to push them away, but they suddenly let go and I fell to the ground. Just when I was about to get up, someone held me down by my shoulders, preventing me from getting to my feet. Then another inmate came over to me saying he was going to “strip the bark from the tree.” He rolled up my pant leg and then with one hand, he pressed down hard on my leg while vigorously rubbing the skin of my shin with the other hand covered in a laundry



detergent bag. He rubbed so fast that before long, my leg turned blood red and began stinging with pain. The other inmate that was holding me down kept wringing my ear. They tortured me like that for more than twenty minutes. Pain shot through my ear and my shin was badly bruised and seeping blood. After that, the young inmate gave me a hard kick on the back, sending me lurching forward. Then he kicked me in the stomach so hard that my back arched in pain. It felt like my internal organs were going to split open. Another inmate came over and kicked me on the back, sending me careening to the floor, after which they threw a blanket over me and began kicking and punching me. My whole body was coursing with pain—there was a cut on my forehead and blood dripped from my nose. They rubbed laundry detergent into my hair and forced me to take off all my clothes and take a cold shower. It was December at the time and snowing outside. The cell's water was melted from the ice in the water towers and was bone-chillingly cold. I was freezing from the frigid water and shivering all over. After that, an inmate took half a glass of laundry detergent dissolved in water and said, "You look like you're freezing. We saved half a glass of 'beer' for you. Go on, drink up." When I didn't drink it, he said, "What? Not enough for you?" and poured some more cold water in. Foam from the detergent rolled down the side of the glass. Seeing that I still refused to drink from the glass, he said: "If you don't drink it, how are we supposed to make you 'set off firecrackers'?" Then two inmates pinned me down on a bed, pinched my nose shut and forced the detergent water down my throat. What they meant by "setting off firecrackers" is to force a person to drink the detergent water and then beat them to get them to throw it back up. I struggled furiously and yelled, "Are you trying to kill me? Does the law not apply here?" One of the police standing guard heard me yelling and barked back: "What are you yelling about? They're just giving

you a little shower—it won't kill you! Yell again and you'll get the electric baton tomorrow!" His words filled me with rage. My whole body was shivering due to the ice-cold water and my skin was coming out with tiny swellings from the cold. Just as I was extending a shaking hand to pick up my clothes and put them on, an inmate kicked me to the ground. With my back arched in pain, I tried to clamber to my feet, but was immediately pinned to the wall by two other inmates, after which point thirteen inmates rushed to me and started beating me like a punching bag. One inmate who had been sentenced to death called out, "Alright, every one of you punch him ten times." He then stood to the side and counted as every inmate got their punches in. I was in such agony that my back arched, my chest and stomach were in unbearable pain and I could barely breathe. After that, another inmate came over and hit me hard on the back of my head two times with his handcuffs. I became dizzy and nauseous, the room started spinning, my ears began to ring and then I was left throwing up for a good long while. Eventually, I was just vomiting yellowish water. I held my hands over my chest and didn't dare take any deep breaths, as even breathing had become painful. Ultimately, I began coughing up blood and it felt like my body was coming apart at the seams. I thought to myself: "These inmates are going to beat me to death and neither my family knows that I've been arrested nor do my brothers and sisters know where I've been taken. If they really do kill me and the police just ditch my body in the middle of nowhere, no one will ever know what happened." Realizing this, I felt very scared and weak, so I prayed to God: "Oh God! I can't take this much longer. If this keeps up, they'll torture me to death. I ask for Your protection, so that I may endure this pain and torment." Just then, I thought of God's words which say: **"Abraham offered up Isaac—what have you offered up? Job offered up everything—what have you offered up? So**

**many people have given their lives, laid down their heads, shed their blood in order to seek the true way. Have you paid that price?”** (The Word,

Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. The Significance of Saving the Descendants of Moab).

Faced with these questions, I was filled with shame. I thought of the saints throughout the ages. Because they spread the gospel and testified to God, some of them were stoned to death, some cut up into pieces, and some even dragged to death by horses. They offered up their precious lives to stand firm in their testimony to God. But after being arrested, beaten, tortured, and having my life threatened, I became weak, negative and cravenly clung to life out of the fear of death. How cowardly I was! I thought of how unconscionable it was of me to fail to stand firm in my testimony to God in this crucial moment, despite enjoying so much of the watering and sustenance of God’s words. I felt deeply accused and vowed to never give in to Satan, no matter what torment lay ahead of me. Only after seeing that I was lying motionless on the ground, did the inmates finally stop beating me.

After about a week or so, Officer Liu came to interrogate me again. Adopting a tone of fake sincerity, he said to me: “Old friend, we’ve looked through your records and you don’t have any history of unlawful behavior. Your parents aren’t getting any younger and your child is crying out for you. They’re all hoping you’ll be home for New Year’s celebrations. Think it over some more. If you tell us what we want to know about the church, we’ll let you go right away.” When I didn’t respond, he shifted tack and said, “You know, even if you don’t say a word to us, we can still sentence you to 3–5 years. You’ve got to realize that this is just how things are—don’t be so stubborn.” When I continued to ignore him, he sent me back to the cell to think over his offer. Back in the cell, I thought about how old my mom was and how she wasn’t in great health. If I really were sentenced to

3–5 years and even died inside prison, who would look after my mom? The more I thought about it, the worse I felt. Eventually, I began to think that maybe I could divulge something inconsequential that could keep me from being sent to prison. Just then, I thought of God's words which say: **"Toward those who showed Me not the slightest loyalty during times of tribulation, I shall be merciful no more, for My mercy only extends so far. I have no liking, furthermore, for anyone who has once betrayed Me, much less do I like to associate with those who sell out the interests of their friends. This is My disposition, regardless of who the person may be"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Prepare Sufficient Good Deeds for Your Destination). From God's words, I saw that God's righteous disposition brooks no offense. God absolutely abhors those that become Judases, sell out the church and betray God, and He will never forgive such people. I clearly understood that Officer Liu was a sly and cunning man, and that if I divulged even a little information, he would find a way to force me to divulge even more. Yet, I actually believed his devilish words. What a fool I was! Due to worrying about my family, I had considered betraying God. I saw that my faith in God was truly weak. Our fates are all in God's hands. God would have the last word on whether I was tortured to death and on what would happen to my family. I should entrust everything into God's hands and rely on Him to get through this ordeal. When I became willing to submit, the inmates in cell 8 stopped beating me. Seeing that the inmates had changed their attitude toward me, the officers transferred me to cell 10.

The inmates in cell 10 beat me just like those in cell 8 had. Before I had a chance to react, they put a blanket over me and began kicking and punching me. They called this "making dumplings." Whenever the inmates were in a bad mood, they would take it out on me. I suffered greatly and felt deeply repressed in that environment. It was a struggle just to get through

each day, so I prayed to God, asking Him to guide me and give me faith. A week later, an inmate who had been sentenced to death said to me: “Tell me about your belief in the Lord and sing your hymns for me. If you don’t do as I tell you, I’ll beat you over the head with these handcuffs. Don’t you dare stop, your job is just to speak and sing now.” So I sang whatever came into mind, and without even thinking, I began to sing a hymn of God’s words **“Have You Ascertained God’s Hopes for You?”: “Who among you is Job? Who is Peter? Why have I repeatedly mentioned Job? Why have I referred to Peter so many times? Have you ever ascertained what My hopes for you are? You should spend more time pondering such things”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. God’s Words to the Entire Universe, Chapter 8). As I sang, I started to become emotional. I thought of how Job continued to praise the name of God even after losing all his property and breaking out in sores all over his body. I thought of Peter, who spent his whole life pursuing loving God and underwent innumerable refinements and hardships, ultimately being crucified upside down on the cross. He loved God to the utmost and submitted to Him unto death. They both bore beautiful testimony to God and received His commendation. God says: **“Who among you is Job? Who is Peter?”** From God’s words, I gained a sense of His expectations. I thought: “I must be like Job and Peter and bear witness to God.” Singing that hymn gave me a fresh dose of motivation. It felt like God was at my side and I felt a renewed determination to endure all suffering and stand firm in my testimony. After that, I told the inmate about how God rules sovereign over all, how He punishes those who do evil and rewards those that do good, testifying God’s righteous disposition. I also told him the story of Lazarus and the rich man. I informed him that those that do evil will suffer retribution and be cast down into hell to receive punishment after death. God has already come to express the truth and do

the work of salvation of humankind, and people must accept the truth to free themselves of sin in order to be purified and enter the kingdom of heaven. After hearing all that, the inmate sighed and said, “It’s too late now! If I had met someone like you earlier on, I never would have gotten to this point.” Another cellmate who was a retired teacher also approvingly said: “I’ve met believers like you before. I’ve never heard of them doing anything illegal.” He then angrily remarked, “In China, there is no such thing as justice or rule of law.” After that, the inmates in that cell stopped beating me. I knew this was a sign of God’s mercy and that He was taking pity on me in my weakness. Seeing God’s almightiness and sovereignty in action, my faith was redoubled.

In December of 2004, the CCP convicted me of “illegal proselytizing causing disturbance to social order” and sentenced me to three years of reeducation through labor. I was furious when I heard my sentence being read—as a believer, I was walking the right path and had never done anything illegal, yet the CCP had forced a three-year sentence onto me. They are truly evil! Later on, a passage of God’s words came to mind: **“In a dark society such as this, where the demons are merciless and inhumane, how could the king of devils, who kills people without batting an eye, tolerate the existence of a God who is lovely, kind, and also holy? How could it applaud and cheer the arrival of God? These lackeys! They repay kindness with hate, they began treating God as an enemy long ago, they abuse God, they are savage in the extreme, they have not the slightest regard for God, they plunder and pillage, they have lost all conscience, they go against all conscience, and they tempt the innocent into senselessness. Forefathers of the ancient? Beloved leaders? They all oppose God! Their meddling has left all beneath heaven in a state of darkness and chaos! Religious freedom? The**

**legitimate rights and interests of citizens? They are all tricks for covering up sin!”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Work and Entry (8)).

The CCP claims to promote freedom of religion while surreptitiously suppressing and persecuting Christians, beating, torturing, and imprisoning believers in God. They seek renown through deception and are evil through and through! By personally experiencing arrest and persecution by the CCP, I was able to recognize their demonic, God-resisting essence. This further strengthened my resolve to follow God until the very end.

In January of 2005, I was transported to a labor camp and assigned to the printing workshop. We had to work about 15 hours per day and often only had about 3–4 hours of rest per day. Every month we had to put in overtime 10–15 days and sometimes even had to work through the night. As time went on, our printing quota increased from 3,000 to over 15,000 sheets. Because of this, I had to carry printing plates back and forth all day and would often cover anywhere from 10 kilometers to dozens of kilometers a day. I would hold the paints in my left hand while continually brushing with my right hand. The smell of the paints made me dizzy, my eyes stung, my vision blurred, and my breathing became labored. All throughout my day, I dealt with constant and unbearable pain in my arms, legs, and shoulders, and I was so tired that I could have gone to sleep standing up. I remember one time, when I had a cold and was running a fever, I became so dizzy that I almost fell over. When the managing supervisor saw this, he said I was just trying to slack off and said: “You’ll pick up the pace if I give you a zap with my stun baton.” I thought of a seventeen-year-old boy that was shocked for being unable to do hard labor. He sustained several burns on his ears and several patches of skin had blackened from other burns. Eventually, it was more than he could take and he tried to kill himself by ingesting nails, but he didn’t die and was

sentenced to an extra month of labor. I knew these people were demons that would kill us without batting an eye and that they would never let us rest, so I just had to grit my teeth and keep going. Due to my excessive workload, my fingers became deformed and I developed cysts in my elbows that swelled to the size of egg yolks. I also developed severe rhinitis and often felt dizzy and short of breath. The combination of overwork and lack of sleep left me so dizzy that I would waver shakily when I walked and felt like I might fall at any moment. Apart from our work, we were also forced to take part in CCP-sponsored brainwashing sessions twice a month. I found the CCP's fallacies and heretical ideas repulsive and had no desire to listen. I suffered greatly in that labor camp and missed the days of gathering and reading God's words with my brothers and sisters. I wanted to get out of that hellish, inhumane situation as soon as possible. I prayed to God and asked Him to give me strength and help me overcome that environment. Later on, a hymn of God's words titled **"How to Be Perfected"** came to mind: **"When you face suffering, you must be able to lay aside concern for the flesh and to not make complaints against God. When God hides Himself from you, you must be able to have the faith to follow Him, to maintain your previous love without allowing it to falter or dissipate. No matter what God does, you must submit to His design and be prepared to curse your own flesh rather than make complaints against Him. When you are faced with trials, you must satisfy God, though you may weep bitterly or feel reluctant to part with some beloved object. Only this is true love and faith"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Those Who Are to Be Made Perfect Must Undergo Refinement). As I sang that hymn, I came to understand God's intention and I felt deeply encouraged and willing to submit to this difficult situation and rely on God and my faith to get through. In my over two years at the labor camp, I developed rhinitis,



bronchitis, rheumatoid arthritis, a hernia, and stomach issues. Once, when my hernia began acting up and a labor camp officer took me to the medical clinic, I saw the attending doctor break off a needle in a prisoner's behind and then use blood-stanching forceps to dig it out. I was terrified when I saw that and didn't dare go back to that clinic. During that time, I couldn't go more than a few steps without pain shooting through my lower abdomen. When I tried to push through and do some work, I felt like I was going to suffocate. The prison officers were worried they'd be held responsible if I died, so they took me to the hospital in the city labor camp for a more thorough medical examination. After completing my medical exam, the doctor said with a note of surprise: "What kind of labor have you been doing? How could you wait until now to seek medical attention! Your hernia will require surgery. Also, both your liver and gallbladder are slightly enlarged, so you're no longer suitable for manual labor. If you continue to work, you will die." However, the officers just took some medicine for me and transported me back to the labor camp. I was very worried at the time because I knew I still had a year left in my sentence and I wasn't sure if I'd be able to make it. After that, I thought: "In two years of imprisonment, I've been tormented by the police and nearly beaten to death by inmates, but despite all that I've suffered, I've never once betrayed God. So, how have I developed such a serious illness? Could it really be my fate to die in this labor camp?" In the midst of my suffering, I prayed to God: "Oh God! What shall I do now? Please guide me." A while later, a passage of God's words came to mind: **"You should know whether there is true faith and true loyalty within you, whether you have a record of suffering for God, and whether you have wholly submitted to God. If you lack these, then there remains within you rebelliousness, deceitfulness, greed, and complaint. As your heart is far from honest,**

**you have never received positive recognition from God and never lived in the light”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Three Admonitions). As I pondered God’s words, I reflected on myself. When faced with sickness and pain, I became negative and weak and even tried to argue with God. I had abandoned my oath and was complaining and rebelling. Where was my submission? Where was my testimony? I remembered that when I was being persecuted and tortured by the CCP and was in pain and weak, it was God’s words that guided me and gave me faith and strength. God had also worked through people, situations, and things to open up a path for me. He was always at my side, looking after me and protecting me. His love for me was so great and I knew I had to stop misunderstanding Him and complaining. No matter what torture or suffering lay ahead, no matter whether I lived or died, I had to rely on God to keep pushing forward! A month later, the police assigned me to a different job where I didn’t have to walk as much and my health improved considerably. I thanked God for His love from the bottom of my heart.

While in the labor camp, I would often silently sing hymns to myself. The one that had a particularly deep impact on me was titled **“What Have You Dedicated to God?”** It says: **“Abraham offered up Isaac—what have you offered up? Job offered up everything—what have you offered up? So many people have given their lives, laid down their heads, shed their blood in order to seek the true way. Have you paid that price? By comparison, you are not at all qualified to enjoy such great grace. Do not regard yourselves too highly. You have nothing to brag about. Such great salvation, such great grace is given to you freely. You have sacrificed nothing, yet you enjoy grace freely. Do you not feel ashamed?”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. The Significance of Saving the Descendants of Moab). Each time I finished singing this hymn, I’d feel full of

gratitude. My plight was nothing compared to that of the saints throughout the ages. In experiencing God's work, they all bore beautiful testimony to God and gained His approval. God was now giving me a similar opportunity to testify—this was His love for me! It was God's words that continually encouraged me and guided me through that long and difficult imprisonment in the labor camp. I couldn't have done without the guidance of God's words in such awful circumstances.

In September of 2007, I completed my sentence and was released from the labor camp. On my way out, they instructed me to report to my local police station after returning home, otherwise my residential registration would be voided. They also threatened me, saying if I were arrested again, I would get a much heavier sentence. After being released, I moved away from home, so that I could continue believing in God and doing my duty. Through being arrested and persecuted by the CCP, I clearly recognized their demonic God-resisting essence. The more they persecuted me, the more I became resolved to follow God, to fulfill my responsibility as a created being, and to do my duty well to repay God's love. Thanks be to God!

## **69. How I Became a False Leader**

By Sonia, South Korea

At the end of 2019, I was put in charge of video work for the church. I felt very stressed because this required skills I had never learned before. The pressure of facing this unfamiliar work felt like a huge weight on my chest. When I followed up on the work, the group leaders often discussed technical issues, and I just sat there only half-understanding what they were talking about. When there was something they disagreed on, they would ask for my views and suggestions and this made me very nervous, because I couldn't tell what the problem was. Sometimes I offered some suggestions based on instinct, but they weren't adopted. I felt ashamed whenever this happened. I was a church leader, so what would the brothers and sisters think of me if I couldn't see these problems or suggest any ways to fix them? After this kind of thing happened a few times, I didn't want to take part in work discussions. I thought, "I don't really understand these kinds of technical problems, and it's too late to learn now. They're the ones who make the videos, so I'll let them put the effort in to discuss that part of the work. I can't guide them in this area, but I can help them more in their life entry. If their states are normal and they can handle the technical aspects, haven't I still fulfilled my duty? This way, I won't embarrass myself in front of them." With these ideas in mind, I let them discuss the work, but I didn't take part.

After a while, I found that video production was progressing very slowly, some problems of principle had also emerged, and the brothers and sisters weren't working together harmoniously. Several sisters reported the group leader, Sister Sarah, to me, one after another, saying she was overbearing and forced others to listen to her in some work discussions,

which meant the videos had to keep being redone. I thought, “Sarah has good caliber. Although her disposition is a bit arrogant, she is quite skilled. It’s normal for people with a bit of talent to be arrogant, I just need to fellowship with her.” So I drew upon God’s word and fellowshipped with her on how to cooperate with others and the lessons she should learn. Sarah expressed her willingness to accept my words and change. However, not long after that, Sister Elsie came to me and said that she had spent time and effort making a video, but Sarah had taken one look and rejected it entirely, giving her no room to negotiate. Elsie was very upset and asked me how she should get through this. I thought, “Is there really something wrong with the video made by Elsie, or is Sarah relying on her arrogant disposition to handle things?” I wanted Elsie to tell me the situation in detail, so I could know exactly what the problem was, but then I remembered that I wasn’t familiar with that part of the work. If she told me and I couldn’t understand the problem, what would she think of me? “Forget it,” I thought, “I’ll let them discuss these issues amongst themselves. It should be fine if I just fellowship with Elsie about her state and tell her to experience this as being pruned. If she can approach this matter correctly, that’ll solve her problem working with Sarah.” So, I fellowshipped with Elsie, telling her to accept other people’s advice, to not be constrained by pride, to first practice the truth and to proactively cooperate with others. Elsie was still frowning after she heard this, and left frustrated. I was also very upset, because I knew her problem hadn’t really been resolved. I’d wanted to see what the issue was with Elsie’s video, but I was worried I wouldn’t be able to figure it out and would seem incompetent. I thought, “Forget it, I’ll just let them talk this problem out amongst themselves.” Then, I went to fellowship with Sarah to resolve her state. I pointed out that her disposition was arrogant, and I told her to work in harmony with others and that they should learn from one

another's strengths, and that even when she had good suggestions, she should discuss them with the others. Sarah promised to focus on changing, but afterward, she was still very arrogant and always felt her opinions were better than others'. She felt that she was skilled and experienced and that the others were inferior to her, and always wanted to have the final say when she worked with them. If the brothers and sisters agreed on a production plan that was different from what she wanted, she'd reject it and demand it be remade according to her requirements. If the others felt her plan was unsuitable and offered advice, she'd never accept it, and would dismiss their advice as useless. The brothers and sisters couldn't communicate with her, and often had to redo their work. Everyone's states kept getting worse and worse and they were living in negativity. Seeing that Sarah was arrogant, self-righteous, and a law unto herself, and that she was seriously affecting the progress of work, I felt very unsettled, but I couldn't get a grasp on these technical issues. At the time, I had a vague sense that Sarah didn't accept the truth and hadn't repented and changed, and perhaps she wasn't fit to do this duty anymore. But then I thought that she was better than others at this, and I wondered if she were dismissed, whether anyone else would be able to take over the job. I felt uncertain, and I wanted to report it to the upper-level leaders, but I worried that if they saw the mess I had made of our work, they might prune me and dismiss me. After struggling with myself, I decided to fellowship with Sarah again. So, I went to her and pointed out her arrogant disposition, exposed her for always being such a tyrant and for wanting the final say, and told her that she was walking the path of an antichrist. She didn't say a word after hearing this, but it was clear that she was resistant. After that, she still did things her own way, and often showed off and belittled others. Most of the brothers and sisters felt constrained and didn't want to work with her. Because of her

disturbance and disruption, the video work was delayed, and in the end, I had no choice but to report the issue to the upper-level leaders. After their investigation, Sarah was dismissed from her post as group leader, and I was dismissed for not doing real work or solving real problems.

After my dismissal, I only admitted that my caliber was poor, that I didn't understand that area of work, and that I couldn't do real work. I had no real understanding of my own problems. Later, when I read God's fellowship on discerning the different manifestations of false leaders, I started to reflect and understand exactly what I had done. Almighty God says: **"False leaders are good at superficial work, but they never do real work. They do not go and inspect, supervise, or guide the various professional work, or find out what's going on in different teams in a timely manner, inspecting how the work is progressing, what problems there are, whether the team supervisors are competent at their job, and how the brothers and sisters report back about or appraise the supervisors. They do not check to see whether anyone is being constrained by the team leaders or supervisors, whether correct suggestions that people make are being adopted, whether anyone who is talented or pursues the truth is being suppressed or excluded, whether any guileless people are being bullied, whether people who expose and report false leaders are being attacked, retaliated against, cleared out, or expelled, whether the team leaders or supervisors are evil people, and whether anyone is being tormented. If false leaders don't do any of this concrete work, they should be dismissed. Say, for example, someone reports to a false leader that there is a supervisor who often constrains and suppresses people. The supervisor has done some things wrong but they won't let the brothers and sisters provide any suggestions, and they even look for excuses to vindicate and defend**

**themselves, never admitting to their mistakes. Should such a supervisor not be promptly dismissed? These are problems that leaders should fix in a timely manner. Some false leaders do not allow supervisors that they have appointed to be exposed, no matter what issues have arisen in their work, and they certainly don't allow them to be reported to the higher-ups—they even tell people to learn to submit. If someone does expose the issues with a supervisor, these false leaders try to shield them or cover up the true facts, saying, 'This is a problem with the supervisor's life entry. It is normal for them to have an arrogant disposition—everyone who has a bit of caliber is arrogant. It's no big deal, I just need to fellowship with them a little.' Through the fellowship, the supervisor expresses their stance, saying, 'I admit I am arrogant. I admit there are times when I am concerned with my own vanity, pride, and status, and don't accept other people's suggestions. But other people aren't good at this profession, they often come up with worthless suggestions, so there is a reason why I don't listen to them.' False leaders do not try to thoroughly understand the situation, they do not look at the results of the supervisor's work, much less what their humanity, disposition, and pursuit are like. All they do is understate things, saying, 'This was reported to me so I'm keeping an eye on you. I'm giving you another chance.' After their talk, the supervisor says that they are willing to repent, but as for whether they really do subsequently repent, or just lie and deceive, false leaders pay this no heed” (The Word, Vol. 5. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers (3)). “False leaders perform work in an incredibly monotonous and superficial way: They pull people in for chats, do a little psychological work, exhort people a little, and think that this is doing real work. This is superficial, is it not? And what issue is hidden**



**behind this superficiality? Is it not naivety? False leaders are extremely naive, and they also view people and things in an incredibly naive way. Nothing is harder to resolve than people's corrupt dispositions—a leopard can't change its spots. False leaders cannot see through to this problem at all. Therefore, when it comes to the kind of supervisors in the church who are constantly causing disturbances, who always constrain and torment people, false leaders do nothing but talk to them, and prune them with a couple of words, and that's it. They do not promptly dismiss and reassign them. This approach of false leaders causes tremendous harm to the work of the church, and often leads to the church work being held up, delayed, damaged, and prevented from progressing normally, smoothly, and efficiently because of the disturbances of some evil people—which is all a grievous consequence of false leaders acting based on their feelings, violating the truth principles, and using the wrong people. By outward appearances, false leaders are not deliberately committing myriad evils, or doing things their own way and establishing their own independent kingdoms, like antichrists do. But false leaders are not able to promptly resolve the various problems that arise in the church's work, and when problems occur with supervisors of various teams, and when those supervisors are unable to shoulder their work, false leaders are not able to promptly alter their duties or dismiss them, bringing serious losses to the church work. And this is all caused by the false leaders' dereliction of duty”** (The Word, Vol. 5. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers (3)). When I read these words of God, I felt especially sad and heartbroken. I felt that the false leader God was describing was me. God reveals that false leaders do not do actual work, never inspect, supervise, or direct work, and never try to understand actual problems first-

hand or follow up on specific jobs. When someone reports a problem with a supervisor, they never do a thorough investigation or discern the supervisor's essence and the effects of their work. All they'll do is fellowship with them and do a little ideological work and think that will solve the problem. This means that they don't transfer inappropriate supervisors promptly, which causes serious harm to the work. My behavior was precisely what God revealed. I rarely got involved in the work, and I didn't often inquire about how it was progressing or offer guidance. I knew that the video production was slow, and people had reported that Sarah was arrogant, insisted on having her way and that this affected the work, yet all I'd done was fellowship on her state. I hadn't investigated disputes they'd had about the video production process or what the source of the problem was, I'd only fellowshipped that they should know their corrupt dispositions and learn lessons. I thought of fellowship and doing ideological work as a way of solving problems and doing real work, and I didn't ask about or solve the real problems that were hindering the work's progress. I hadn't transferred or handled the group leader who was disrupting and disturbing things, I just let her continue to impede the video work. Was I not the false leader revealed in God's word? During that time, more than one person had told me that they were constrained by Sarah. All the videos had to be approved by her, and if others made decisions without her, she would reject them. No matter what they were discussing, the brothers and sisters had to wait for her input, which greatly delayed the work. In fact, she already held the power in the group and had the final say. The others constantly reported problems with her, but I was blind and ignorant and rarely had a deep understanding of the work, so I only looked at the surface of these problems and couldn't discern Sarah's very serious issues. I still thought that she was skilled, but that her disposition was just a bit arrogant, and with a little

fellowship, she could reflect on herself and gain some self-knowledge. Because I couldn't see the nature of what she was doing clearly, no matter how much I fellowshiped, I was just spouting words and doctrines, and not solving the actual problem at all. As a result, for half a year, many people were constrained by her, felt negative and weak, production was ineffective, and the video work was seriously hindered and disturbed. Only then did I see clearly that massive harm had been done to the work because I hadn't done real work or transferred the inappropriate group leader in time. I was a veritable false leader. At first, I'd thought that I had failed at my work just because my caliber was poor and I didn't understand that area of work. Only after checking myself against God's word did I see that I hadn't even tried to understand the issues first-hand or to resolve actual problems. This wasn't just a matter of poor caliber, it was an issue of not doing actual work.

I continued to reflect on myself, "Why am I reluctant to learn more about this work?" Recalling some of my thoughts and behaviors from before, only then did I realize that deep down I had always held a fallacious view. I felt that I didn't understand that area of work, so I wanted to avoid issues involving it, and I didn't want to investigate it or study it. I feared that if I discussed these problems with people who did understand, I'd reveal how ignorant I was. So even if the work was something I was supposed to take responsibility for, I'd still want to ignore it. Later, I read in God's word: **"The chief characteristic of the work of false leaders is blathering on about doctrine and parroting slogans. After issuing their orders, they simply wash their hands of the matter. They don't ask questions about the project's subsequent development; they do not ask whether any problems, deviations, or difficulties have arisen. They consider their job finished as soon as they assign the work. In fact, as a**

**leader, after completing work arrangements, you must keep track of the work's progress. Even if you aren't familiar with that field of work—even if you lack any knowledge of it—you can find a way to do your work. You can find someone who is knowledgeable, who understands the work in question, to check things over and make suggestions. From their suggestions you can identify the appropriate principles, and thus you will be able to keep track of the work. Whether or not you are familiar with or understand the type of work in question, at the very least you must preside over it, follow up on it, and continuously make inquiries and ask questions about its progress. You must maintain a grasp of such matters; this is your responsibility, it is part of your job. Not keeping track of the work, not doing anything more once it has been assigned—washing your hands of it—is the way false leaders do things. Not following up or providing guidance on the work, not inquiring about or resolving issues that arise, and not grasping the progress or efficiency of the work—these are also manifestations of false leaders”** (The Word, Vol. 5. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers. The

Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers (4)). From God's word, I understood that not following up on specific jobs on the grounds that I didn't understand those areas and not solving real problems that existed in the work is a manifestation of a false leader who is irresponsible and shirks their obligations. As a leader, the least you should do is preside over and follow up on work, ask about its progress, and find and solve problems within it. Even if you don't understand an area well, you can ask those who do to make checks and give suggestions, and work with them to make up for your shortcomings. You can still do a good job that way. But I'd tried to avoid anything involving technical work and didn't take part in specific jobs on the basis that I didn't understand them. I did this to cover up my

shortcomings and deficiencies and to maintain my image and status and because I feared that I'd be looked down upon by my brothers and sisters if I wasn't able to guide them. When there were problems in production, when the brothers and sisters disagreed about something, couldn't cooperate, and the progress slowed, rather than actually resolving things, I took a hands-off approach. Wasn't I precisely the false leader revealed in God's word? In fact, all of the church's work involves the truth principles, so simply mastering specialized knowledge isn't enough to do a job well. As a leader, even if you don't understand an area of work, you should know the relevant truth principles so you can guide it and check on it. Some leaders don't understand an area of work at first, but they study hard and master the relevant truth principles, after which they can actually guide it and check on it, and the work keeps improving. I asked myself, "I always said I didn't understand this area of work, but did I ever try hard to study it? Did I put in the effort or pay a price? When I didn't know how to check things, did I seek the truth principles?" I'd done none of these things. I was slippery in my duty, didn't try to make progress, and when I didn't understand things I didn't try to learn from others, much less seek the truth principles. I used my unfamiliarity with that area of work as an excuse to protect my name and status, which meant that many real problems and difficulties that arose as the others did their duties couldn't be solved promptly, and this seriously impacted the results of the video work. These were the consequences of my parroting slogans and not doing real work or solving real problems.

Afterward, I also read in God's word: **"When God asks that people put aside fame, gain, and status, it is not that He is depriving people of the right to choose; rather, it is because, while pursuing fame, gain, and status, people disrupt and disturb the work of the church and the life entry of God's chosen people, and can even have an influence on more**

people's eating and drinking God's words, understanding the truth, and thus achieving God's salvation. This is an indisputable fact. When people pursue their own fame, gain, and status, it is certain that they will not pursue the truth and that they will not faithfully fulfill their duty. They will only speak and act for the sake of fame, gain, and status, and all the work they do, without the least exception, is for those things' sake. To behave and act in such a way is, without question, to walk the path of antichrists; it is a disruption and disturbance of God's work, and all its various consequences are hindering the spread of the kingdom gospel and the carrying out of God's will within the church. So, one may say with certainty that the path walked by those who pursue fame, gain, and status is the path of resistance against God. It is intentional resistance against Him, naysaying Him—it is to cooperate with Satan in resisting God and standing in opposition to Him. This is the nature of people's pursuit of fame, gain, and status. The problem with people pursuing their own interests is that the goals they pursue are the goals of Satan—they are goals that are wicked and unjust. When people pursue personal interests such as fame, gain, and status, they unwittingly become a tool of Satan, they become an outlet for Satan, and, moreover, they become an embodiment of Satan. They play a negative role in the church; toward the work of the church, and toward the normal church life and normal pursuit of God's chosen people, the effect they have is to disturb and impair; they have an **adverse and negative effect**” (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Nine (Part One)). As I contemplated God's words, I saw that all I did in my duty was to maintain my image and status, and that I hadn't been safeguarding the church's work at all, which had brought harm to it. I had been acting as a servant of Satan, disrupting and hindering the work of the church. Because I

feared others would look down on me if I didn't understand an area of work, I didn't take part in work discussions, nor did I follow up on specific jobs. When I saw that the group leader was a law unto herself and disrupting the work, and that I couldn't resolve this, I feared the upper-level leaders would find out I couldn't do real work and dismiss me, so I didn't report this upward or seek a solution, and just looked on as the work of the church suffered. I was blatantly concealing the facts, deceiving those above and below me, and making people believe that the work I oversaw was problem-free and progressing normally, so that I could protect my leadership position. While I tried my best to protect my image and status, my brothers and sisters were constrained and had no way forward in their duty. They lived in pain and misery, suffered in terms of their life entry, and the work was severely hindered, but I didn't care about any of this. Wasn't this a manifestation of false leadership? As I reflected on these things, I felt a little afraid, remorseful and regretful. I hated myself for being so selfish and deceitful. My conscience had become so numb and senseless! Video work plays a key part in spreading the gospel. I performed such an important duty, yet I wasn't considerate of God's intentions, I maintained my image and status in everything, and I disrupted and disturbed the church's work. The thought of how I had behaved in my duty and the harm I'd brought to the church's work was as painful as a knife stuck in my heart. I felt so ashamed. Through tears of remorse, I prayed to God, "God, I was cunning and treacherous in my duty, I didn't do real work and it is already too late to repair the damage I've done to the church's work. I want to repent to You in my duty in the future, and I ask that You scrutinize me."

Later, I found some paths of practice and entry in God's word. Almighty God says: **"How can you be people who are ordinary and normal? How can you, as God says, assume the proper place of a**

created being—how can you not try to be a superman, or some great figure? How should you practice to be an ordinary and normal person? How can this be done? ... Firstly, don't give yourself a title and become bound by it, saying, 'I am the leader, I am the head of the team, I am the supervisor, no one knows this business better than me, no one understands the skills more than me.' Don't get caught up in your self-appointed title. As soon as you do, it will bind your hands and feet, and what you say and do will be affected. Your normal thinking and judgment will also be affected. You must free yourself from the constraints of this status. First, lower yourself from this official title and position and stand in the place of an ordinary person. If you do, your mentality will become somewhat normal. You must also admit and say, 'I don't know how to do this, and I don't understand that, either—I'm going to have to do some research and studying,' or 'I've never experienced this, so I don't know what to do.' When you are capable of saying what you're really thinking and speaking honestly, you will be possessed of normal reason. Others will know the real you, and will thus have a normal view of you, and you will not have to put on an act, nor will there be any great pressure on you, and so you will be able to communicate with people normally. Living like this is free and easy; anyone who finds living exhausting has caused this themselves. Don't pretend or put up a front. First, open up about what you're thinking in your heart, about your true thoughts, so that everyone is aware of them and understands them. As a result, your concerns and the barriers and suspicions between you and others will all be eliminated. You're also hobbled by something else. You always consider yourself the head of the team, a leader, a worker, or someone with a title, status, and standing: If you say you don't understand something, or can't do



**something, are you not denigrating yourself? When you put aside these fetters in your heart, when you stop thinking of yourself as a leader or a worker, and when you stop thinking that you're better than other people and feel that you are an ordinary person, the same as everyone else, and that there are some areas in which you are inferior to others—when you fellowship the truth and work-related matters with this attitude, the effect is different, as is the atmosphere. If, in your heart, you always have misgivings, if you always feel stressed and hobbled, and if you want to rid yourself of these things but can't, then you should pray seriously to God, reflect on yourself, see your shortcomings, and strive toward the truth. If you can put the truth into practice, you will get results”** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Treasuring God's Words Is the Foundation of Belief in God). After reading God's words, my heart felt much brighter. I'd always put myself in the position of leader. I'd always wanted to pretend that I knew everything to make others look up to me, and I didn't want others to see the real me. I believed that to be a leader, I had to be above others and capable of doing anything, but I was mistaken. The truth was, I wasn't better than the others. My corrupt dispositions were the same as those of my brothers and sisters, and there were many things I couldn't see clearly or understand. Being a leader was just a chance to practice. I should put my rank aside, be honest, open up about my real self with others, and work with everyone on an equal footing as we do our duties. If I don't understand something, I should admit it and let those who do understand fellowship more. That way, not only can I solve work problems promptly, I can also make up for my own deficiencies. If there is an issue I can't figure out or solve, I should report it upward quickly to avoid serious consequences from untimely handling.

Now, I have been chosen to act as a church leader again. I am very grateful, and I know that God has given me this opportunity so I can repent. I can't make up for my past transgressions, so I want to do my best in the future when I'm performing my duty. I swore an oath to myself: "God, I'm willing to do all that I can and ought to in order to perform this duty well. If I rely on my corrupt disposition and become irresponsible in my duty again, I hope You will chasten and discipline me." There are many tasks in my duty now that I don't know much about. Sometimes, when brothers and sisters come to me to discuss work, I don't understand some of it very well, and I still feel the desire to avoid it and to opt out of participating. But when I think about the lessons I've learned from my previous failures, I feel a little scared and I quickly pray to God. I ask Him to help me to be calm, to listen carefully, and work with my brothers and sisters to find ways to solve these problems. When I take on a burden and actually engage in these tasks, not only can I understand what the problem is, sometimes I can give some reasonable suggestions. When there are issues of principle involved that I can't see clearly or solve, I report them to the upper-level leaders and seek help. This way the work isn't delayed, and the problem is quickly resolved.

## 70. Why Can't I Stick to the Principles?

By Isabella, France

In August 2021 I started practicing as a church leader. In my interactions with Lillian, who was in charge of the gospel work, I noticed she often made a big deal out of small problems people had, and told everyone about them. She couldn't work well with others and she was always saying things that went against the facts. Once in a gathering, she said the previous church leader didn't focus on gospel work and never asked her how her work was going. But in fact, that leader was always following up on her work. Also, she reported to our leader that the work was going really well, creating the impression that things were proceeding normally. Actually, though, she didn't get any real work done. In one gathering, she kept stressing the difficulties in her work, saying the gospel workers were no good, but when I looked into the details, I found there was lots of work she hadn't done, so she had no basis for saying that. I called her out for not doing real work and shifting the blame. She didn't say anything in response. I thought she'd do some self-reflection, but surprisingly, she sent my partner, Maya, a message saying she wanted nothing to do with me anymore, that I pruned her without basis when I saw a problem and didn't understand her actual difficulties. She also said she couldn't be like me, but had to treat the brothers and sisters with love and patience. When I read this, I was just stunned for a moment. There were so many problems in her duty. I was just pointing them out—it was nowhere near pruning her. How could she say I pruned her without basis? That's not what happened. How could she be so slippery and deceitful? I wanted to explain things to Maya, but I got halfway through a message to her then hesitated. If I sent a message explaining or describing Lillian's issues, Maya

might think I lacked self-awareness in the face of problems, and didn't treat people right. At that thought, I didn't send the message. I heard afterward that Lillian used opening up her heart to others as a pretext for saying that I baselessly pruned her without knowing the background, and it had made her feel negative. Hearing about this was really upsetting for me. I didn't know how I could check on her work in the future, and I felt like she was really hard to get along with. A couple days later, because of work needs, we wanted to transfer a few people from the scope of Lillian's responsibilities to go do watering work. Surprisingly, the moment I told her, she said, looking sour, "If you want to transfer them, just do it. I don't care. I'm sure to have poor results in any case." Later she said to me openly that she had an issue with the sister in charge of watering work, and that's why she didn't agree with the transfer. She also said that no one could blame her for coming down hard on that sister if she caused more problems. Hearing the threat in her words, I felt like she wasn't just hard to get along with, but lacked humanity, and I had to be careful when I followed up on her work, or else she'd find something to use against me.

Once, an upper leader assigned us to do cleansing work, to investigate and learn whether the church had evil people or antichrists, and if any came to light, to expel them from the church. Lillian came to mind. Her humanity was poor and she refused to accept the truth. She held a grudge against anyone who mentioned problems to her, and would distort things, turning black into white and spreading her bias behind their back. I thought I should look into her general behavior. But then I thought about how resistant Lillian was to me looking into her work, and how she had said behind my back that I pruned her baselessly. If I went to collect assessments of her this time, would the brothers and sisters think I was using that chance to get my own back on her? Would my partner think that I loved status too much, and

that I'd look for chances to make anyone who pointed out my problems pay? Then everyone would be afraid of me and avoid me, and it would be a big problem if they tried to discern my issues and reported me as a false leader. I figured, forget it. I could take care of it after someone else discerned her problems. Otherwise, if I was the primary one speaking out about this, it could be misunderstood. So, I didn't bring up the issue. Before long, Maya mentioned that Lillian's humanity was poor and wanted to look into her behavior. I felt both happy and a little guilty when she said that. I already knew that about Lillian, and I should have investigated her behavior right away, but I didn't deal with it because I was worried people would think I was getting my own back on her. I wasn't protecting the church's work. But at least someone else had said something, so I didn't need to worry about it anymore. After collecting assessments of Lillian, we saw that most people who had written them didn't know her very well and provided very little information. Just a few people noticed her problems. I knew the right thing to do under these circumstances was to seek out people who had interacted with her over the long term, but I was concerned others would say I was targeting her out of personal animus, so I didn't want to say anything. At that point, Maya said we should keep an eye on how things went, and I didn't say anything further.

Later I found out that other brothers and sisters had given Lillian suggestions and she not only wouldn't accept them, but hit back with false countercharges. Once, a waterer gave Lillian some feedback that some of the people the gospel workers preached to didn't fit the principles and lacked humanity. Lillian not only refused to accept that, but aired her bias and grievances in front of the gospel workers. She said they were all following the principles in their duty, but since the waterers hadn't clearly fellowshiped on the truth with the people the gospel workers had worked

so hard to convert, some new believers had been misled by rumors and then dropped out. In a gathering, Maya and I fellowshiped on and dissected the essence of this problem, in relation to Lillian's behavior. We fellowshiped with her several more times after that. I thought she'd self-reflect, but she just wouldn't budge, and kept spreading her prejudices against the waterers. She said she was feeling negative and didn't know how she could do her job. Because of the discord she sowed, some gospel workers and waterers were grumbling to each other, and there wasn't any harmonious cooperation. I knew Lillian wasn't suited to be a supervisor and she should be dismissed right away. I really regretted not having quickly investigated and dismissed her from the start. I knew she lacked humanity, but I gave her more chances to keep disrupting the church's work. I felt awful. I prayed to God, asking Him to guide me to self-reflect and know myself.

In my seeking, I saw that God's words say: **"When people take no responsibility toward their duties, do them in a perfunctory manner, act like people pleasers, and do not defend the interests of the house of God, what disposition is this? This is cunningness, it is the disposition of Satan. The most prominent aspect of man's philosophies for worldly dealings is cunningness. People think that if they are not cunning, they will be liable to offend others and unable to protect themselves; they think that they must be cunning enough not to hurt or offend anyone, thereby keeping themselves safe, protecting their livelihoods, and gaining a firm foothold among other people. Nonbelievers all live by Satan's philosophies. They are all people pleasers and do not offend anyone. You have come to the house of God, read the word of God, and listened to the sermons of God's house, so why are you unable to practice the truth, speak from the heart, and be an honest person? Why are you always a people pleaser? People pleasers only protect**

**their own interests, and not the interests of the church. When they see someone do evil and harm the church's interests, they ignore it. They like to be people pleasers, and do not offend anyone. This is irresponsible, and that kind of person is too cunning and untrustworthy"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Part Three). I understood from the revelation of God's words that I had avoided offending Lillian in an effort to maintain my image and status, and I hadn't stood up for the church when I saw her disrupting its work. Instead, I was trying to be a people-pleaser by turning a blind eye. That was irresponsible, cunning behavior. Nonbelievers live by satanic philosophies to protect their own interests. They carefully observe others when speaking and see which way the wind is blowing—they're sly and deceitful in that way. In my duty, I had the same attitude as a nonbeliever. I clearly saw that Lillian's humanity was no good and she had already become disruptive to church work. She should have been dismissed. But I didn't want the others to think I was just getting my own back on her, so I avoided the issue by trying not to do anything that could arouse suspicion, and I put off handling Lillian. I wanted to wait until other brothers and sisters gained discernment over her. Wanting to protect my reputation and status, and despite knowing she was disrupting church work, I still preferred to let the church's interests be harmed rather than observing the principles, exposing her, and properly dealing with the situation. I was really crafty, selfish, and despicable. At this thought I felt regretful and guilty. I knew that I couldn't keep on turning a blind eye. I had to handle the issue of Lillian in line with church principles, and stop simply protecting my own interests.

Maya and I went to talk to Lillian after that, exposing how she twisted things and arbitrarily spread her prejudices about others, hurting relationships between the brothers and sisters, and that this had disrupted

the work of the church. To my surprise, she didn't accept any of this but lashed back instead, indignantly saying, "I shared issues with you, and instead of resolving them you used them to find fault with me. I see you don't do any real work at all." Seeing how overbearing she was being, with absolutely no self-awareness, we dissected with her the nature and consequences of her words and actions, drawing on the relevant words of God. But she wouldn't take any of it in—she kept arguing back and justifying herself.

Afterward, I read two passages of God's words that helped me understand Lillian's essence. God's words say: **"Anyone who often disturbs church life and the life entry of God's chosen people is a disbeliever and an evil person, and they must be cleared out from the church. Regardless of who the person is or how they have acted in the past, if they often disturb the work of the church and church life, refuse being pruned, and always defend themselves with flawed reasoning, they must be cleared out from the church. This approach is entirely for the sake of maintaining the normal progression of church work and protecting the interests of God's chosen people, fully aligning with the truth principles and God's intentions"** (The Word, Vol. 5. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers (14)). **"No matter what mistakes they have made or bad things they have done, those people with vicious dispositions will not allow anyone to expose them or prune them. Should someone expose and offend them, they will become enraged, retaliate, and never let the issue drop. They have no patience and tolerance for other people, and do not exercise forbearance toward them. What principle is their conduct based on? 'I would rather betray than be betrayed.' In other words, they do not tolerate being offended by anyone. Is this not the logic of evil people? This is exactly the logic of**



**evil people. No one is allowed to offend them. To them, it is unacceptable for anyone to trigger them in even the slightest way, and they hate anyone who does so. They will keep going after that person and never let the matter go—that is how evil people are”** (The Word, Vol. 5. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers (14)). I saw from God’s words that evil people have a vicious disposition and won’t accept the truth one bit. They detest anyone who exposes and points out their problems, seeing them as the enemy, and they may even strike back in revenge. I held Lillian up against that. She never self-reflects or learned about herself when confronted with problems, and she hated anyone who gave her suggestions, seeing them as her enemy. Meanwhile, she twisted the truth, turned black into white and spread prejudices and complaints about others, provoking problems in brothers and sisters’ relationships. This led to disharmony, which disrupted and hindered the gospel work. Others gave her pointers and helped her many times, but she wouldn’t accept what they said. She responded with hostility and made false countercharges, without a shred of remorse. By her nature, she hated and was averse to the truth. She had been shown to be an evil person, and if we let her stay on in the church, it would just bring more trouble to the church’s work. And so, Maya and I fellowshiped with the brothers and sisters about our discernment of Lillian’s behavior, in accordance with principles, and dismissed her after a vote. We assigned her to isolate and self-reflect, and would clear her out if there were any further disturbances.

Later on, a succession of brothers and sisters said that it was really constraining to work with Lillian. She was always castigating people, and lots of people were scared of her. Everyone got ready beforehand whenever she was coming to look into their work, worried about being reprimanded for anything they couldn’t properly account for. I felt really uneasy. Lillian

had done so much wickedness, hurting the brothers and sisters so much. I was a church leader, but on discovering an evil person I had failed to handle it. In which case, what was I for? I wasn't getting real work done. For a few days I pondered why it was that I could properly handle other evil people and antichrists, yet avoided and didn't wish to handle the matter of Lillian. I read some of God's words: **"No matter what they're doing, antichrists first consider their own interests, and they only act once they've thought it all out; they do not truly, sincerely, and absolutely submit to the truth without compromise, but do so selectively and conditionally. What condition is this? It is that their status and reputation must be safeguarded, and must not suffer any loss. Only after this condition is satisfied will they decide and choose what to do. That is, antichrists give serious consideration to how to treat the truth principles, God's commissions, and the work of God's house, or how to deal with the things they face. They do not consider how to satisfy God's intentions, how to keep from damaging the interests of God's house, how to satisfy God, or how to benefit the brothers and sisters; these are not the things they consider. What do antichrists consider? Whether their own status and reputation will be affected, and whether their prestige will be lowered. If doing something according to the truth principles benefits the work of the church and the brothers and sisters, but would cause their own reputation to suffer and cause many people to realize their true stature and know what sort of nature essence they have, then they will definitely not act in accordance with the truth principles. If doing some real work will cause more people to think highly of them, look up to them and admire them, allow them to gain even greater prestige, or enable their words to carry authority and make more people submit to them, then they will choose to do it that way; otherwise, they will never**

**choose to disregard their own interests out of consideration for the interests of God's house or of the brothers and sisters. This is the nature essence of antichrists. Isn't it selfish and despicable?"** (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Nine (Part Three)). **"If someone says they love the truth and that they pursue the truth, but in essence, the goal they pursue is to distinguish themselves, to show off, to make people think highly of them, to achieve their own interests, and the performing of their duty is not to submit to or satisfy God, and instead is to achieve fame, gain, and status, then their pursuit is illegitimate. That being the case, when it comes to the work of the church, are their actions an obstacle, or do they help move it forward? They are clearly an obstacle; they do not move it forward. Some people wave the banner of doing the work of the church yet pursue their own personal fame, gain, and status, run their own operation, create their own little group, their own little kingdom—is this kind of person doing their duty? All the work they do essentially disrupts, disturbs, and impairs the work of the church. What is the consequence of their pursuit of fame, gain, and status? First, this affects how God's chosen people eat and drink God's word normally and understand the truth, it hinders their life entry, stops them from entering the right track of faith in God, and leads them onto the wrong path—which harms the chosen ones, and brings them to ruin. And what does it ultimately do to the work of the church? It is disturbance, impairment, and dismantlement. This is the consequence brought about by people's pursuit of fame, gain, and status"** (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Nine (Part One)). God's words reveal that antichrists only consider their own reputation and status in their actions. If they can get something done that will improve their reputation, an antichrist will do just that. If doing things according to principle could

damage their reputation or status, an antichrist will cast the principles aside and only think about what would protect their personal interests, what would benefit them. They're particularly selfish and vile. And hadn't I, too, been acting like an antichrist? I'd long since found out that Lillian was a person of poor humanity, and that she didn't pursue the truth. She hated anyone who gave her suggestions, finding fault with them and using that to judge and attack them, and she was going to carry on hindering the church's work if not immediately replaced. But because she had something against me, I was worried the brothers and sisters would think I was just taking revenge by investigating her. They might even think of me as a false leader. I felt my position would be threatened. And because of Lillian's disposition, I was worried that if I dismissed her, she'd denigrate me behind my back or find some pretext for condemning or reporting me. I felt that handling her could only be to my detriment, and could easily impact my reputation and position, so instead I adopted a wait-and-see attitude and did nothing. I really was crafty and selfish. When I'd previously discovered people who should be cleared out or expelled during cleansing work, I'd been able to handle it according to principle. That's because I didn't know most of them. Most importantly, they didn't constitute a threat to my reputation and status. If I had them cleared out or expelled from the church, the brothers and sisters would consider me a leader who understood the truth and had discernment, and who did real work. But when handling Lillian, a problem which directly involved my own position, I simply buried my head in the sand, trying to protect my own interests. Previously, I'd stuck to the principles because my personal interests were not at stake, rather than because I genuinely wanted to do the church's work well. I realized from God's words that working to protect personal prestige and status is basically a way of sabotaging and disrupting church work. It hinders the normal

progression of the work. Wanting to protect my reputation and position, I failed to promptly handle an evil person. The nature of that problem is really serious. It's not just a minor instance of revealing corruption, it's actually harboring an evil person, indulging her disruption of the church's work. That's acting as Satan's minion and is also doing evil. These words of God were especially poignant: **"You should isolate or clear out evil people as soon as you discover that they have the essence of evil people, before they can do any great evil. This will minimize the damage they do; it is the wise choice. If leaders and workers wait until an evil person causes some kind of disaster to handle them, they are being passive. That would prove that the leaders and workers are very foolish, and have no principles to their actions"** (The Word, Vol. 5. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers (14)). Thinking over God's words made me feel terrible, and very guilty. As a leader, my job was to protect God's chosen people from oppression and disruption by evil people, and to safeguard the normal life of the church so that its work can proceed in a proper and orderly way. But when an evil person appeared in the church, I dragged my feet and did nothing. I wasn't fulfilling a leader's responsibilities, which led to the brothers and sisters being constrained and attacked by the evil person, and their life entry being harmed. Church work was also disrupted. What I'd done was abhorrent to God!

Later on, I kept mulling things over. I knew that when an evil person was disrupting the work of the church, it was in line with the principles to handle the matter quickly. So why was I afraid that others would misread the situation and say I was tormenting her? And what really is tormenting someone? I read this in God's words: **"What other manifestations are common when antichrists work? (Antichrists suppress and torment people for the sake of their own status.) It is a most common thing for**

antichrists to torment other people, and it is one of their concrete manifestations. In order to maintain their status, antichrists are always demanding that everyone obey and heed them. If they find that someone does not heed them or is antipathetic and resistant toward them, they will adopt the tactics of suppressing and tormenting that person, in order to subdue them. Antichrists often suppress those whose opinions are different from their own. They often suppress people who pursue the truth and loyally do their duties. They often suppress people of relative decency and uprightness who do not flatter or toady up to them. They suppress those who do not get along with or yield to them. Antichrists do not treat others based on the truth principles. They cannot treat people fairly. When they take a dislike to someone, when someone seems to have not yielded to them at heart, they find chances and excuses, and even come up with various pretexts, to attack and torment that person, going so far as to take up the banner of doing the church work to suppress them. They do not relent until people have become pliant and dare not say no to them; they do not relent until people have acknowledged their status and power, greet them with a smile, express endorsement and compliance toward them, and do not dare to get any ideas about them. In any situation, in any group, the word 'fairness' does not exist in an antichrist's treatment of others, and the word 'loving' does not exist in their treatment of brothers and sisters who truly believe in God. They regard whoever constitutes a threat to their status as a nail in their eye and a thorn in their side, and they will find chances and pretexts to torment them. If that person does not yield, they torment them, and do not stop until that person is subdued. Antichrists doing this is very out of line with the truth principles, and in enmity with the truth, so should they be

**pruned? Not only that—nothing less than exposing, discerning, and classifying them will do. An antichrist treats everyone according to their own preferences, their own intents and aims. Under their authority, whoever has a sense of justice, whoever can speak fairly, whoever dares to fight injustice, whoever holds to the truth principles, whoever is genuinely talented and learned, whoever can bear testimony to God—all such people will meet with the antichrist’s jealousy, and they will be suppressed, excluded, and even trampled beneath the antichrist’s foot to the point they cannot rise again. Such is the hatred with which an antichrist treats good people and those who pursue the truth. It can be said that more or less the majority of those whom an antichrist feels jealous of and suppresses are positive figures and good people. Most of them are people whom God will save, whom God can make use of, whom God will make perfect. In employing such tactics of suppression and exclusion against those whom God will save, use, and make perfect, are antichrists not opponents of God? Are they not people who resist God?”** (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Eleven).

Pondering God’s words, I realized that tormenting someone, and adhering to the principles, are two distinct matters. We have to consider the underlying motives for our action, and we also have to consider if the way we treat someone has a basis in God’s words. If we identify someone as being an evil person or an antichrist, based on the truth principles, then clearing out or expelling them is ridding the church of a scourge, in accordance with the principles. It’s not tormenting. But when antichrists and evil people suppress and torment others, it comes entirely from their vicious motives. They’re jealous of those who pursue the truth and have a sense of justice. They hate those who have discernment over them and dare to call them out. They eliminate dissenters to protect their own power and

status. They leap upon others' slightest issue and make a big deal out of it. They twist facts and slander others, leveling all sorts of accusations against them to get them cleared out or expelled. Their motives and intentions are entirely inimical to the truth and to God. They are condemned and damned by God. I was exposing and dismissing Lillian based on my discernment of her as an evil person, in accordance with God's words. It wasn't because of a personal grudge, and I wasn't tormenting her. I was seeing things superficially and didn't understand what tormenting really was. I felt that handling an issue concerning someone who had a grudge against me amounted to tormenting them. I didn't consider whether they were an evil person and what role they played in the church. As a result of my mistaken perspective, I was immobilized. How foolish! Coming to understand all this felt like a great release.

After that, I intentionally practiced doing my duty according to the principles. Especially in the case of cleansing work, if it was determined that someone was a candidate for being cleared out or expelled, whether they had something against me or not, I'd handle it according to principles. When I put that into practice I felt much more at peace. I've personally experienced that in doing a duty, we have to set aside concerns about reputation and status, uphold the principles and protect the church's work, and in this way feel peace and joy.



## **71. Lack of Knowledge Is No Excuse**

By Susanna, Sweden

In May of 2021, I was chosen to serve as a church leader and was mainly put in charge of our video production work. I was a little bit worried about doing this duty and thought to myself, “I’ve done some video production in the past, but my skills in this area are still a bit lacking. Will I really be able to supervise this work well? If I underperform and am replaced, what will my brothers and sisters think of me? Also, the people I’m supervising all have more technical knowledge than me—if I don’t identify the issues in their duties and can’t provide substantial suggestions, they’ll certainly think I’m an amateur who isn’t an effective supervisor and is not fit to be a leader.” The thought of this made me a bit anxious, but I knew that I should first accept this new duty and submit to the church’s arrangements.

To get up to speed with the work as soon as possible, I would sit in on any discussions my brothers and sisters would have about the work. At first, I would listen along diligently, but gradually I started to realize that I didn’t understand a lot of the professional skills being used and I couldn’t get a word in edgewise. I worried that if the brothers and sisters asked me for my viewpoint and I didn’t provide any substantive suggestions, they might think I was overestimating my own abilities and wasn’t qualified to be checking up on their work when I didn’t understand it at all myself. Would they think less of me? To maintain my image as a leader, apart from sharing my understanding of God’s words, I wouldn’t say a single thing during our discussions and overviews of the work during gatherings. I didn’t want to participate or pay close attention to discussions concerning the professional side of video production. I stopped bearing even the slightest burden and

always thought, “I don’t understand the technical side of things anyways, so I’ll mainly just resolve any issues they have with life entry. As for technical issues, I’ll just leave them to rely upon and pray to God and discuss among themselves.” I remember one time, a sister sent a video she was working on to the group asking for suggestions. At the time, I thought that since I didn’t understand the technical side of production, I wouldn’t be able to find any issues in the video, and, what’s more, I would completely lose face if I said something wrong in front of everyone, so I didn’t plan on making any suggestions, and didn’t watch the video very closely. Later on, a group leader found an issue in the sister’s video and asked me if I had noticed it. I could feel myself blushing because I hadn’t watched the video carefully. To avoid being found out, I waited until the very end of every discussion to provide an overview and summarize what everyone said or otherwise just chimed in with a brief, perfunctory comment like, “I pretty much agree with everything that’s been said, I don’t have anything else to add.” I had barely said anything throughout the entire gathering and I felt terribly embarrassed and anguished—I even felt like there was no need for me to be there. After that, I began to avoid the technical aspects of the work even more and would seldom check up on the group leader’s work. During gatherings, I would just get a sense of people’s current states, observing whether they were bearing a burden in their duty or just going through the motions. As for the issues and difficulties related to their video production, I didn’t bother to get into the details with them, thinking that the group leader could handle it and I might as well let people with the appropriate technical skills resolve the issues. This would also prevent me from being exposed as useless if I were to be unable to resolve their issues. To give the impression that I could still do some actual work, whenever I noticed or heard that someone was in a bad state or had become negative, I would be quick to

find words of God to fellowship with them in support. However, as soon as they brought up any difficulties they were having in their work, I would just perfunctorily respond, “When we rectify our state and rely upon God, God will lead us to resolve these problems.” Whenever I said this, their states would improve temporarily, but as soon as they encountered another problem in their duty and their issues remained unresolved, they would become negative again. Because I failed to resolve actual issues and didn’t check in on and supervise the work, many problems arose in the video production work, the brothers and sisters were not noticeably improving in their technical skills, they didn’t have a grasp of the relevant principles in the duty, would make the same mistakes repeatedly and, as a result, the quality of the work diminished. Despite the fact that my upper leader pointed out this issue to me and tried to help me, I didn’t have any real knowledge of myself. Not soon after that, I was replaced because I had failed to do actual work in my duty.

I felt absolutely awful after being suddenly replaced and I kept wondering, “Why did I end up becoming a false leader that didn’t do actual work despite being quite busy in my duty every day? Just what was the reason for my failure?” During that time, I read quite a lot of truths regarding discerning false leaders, and saw that nearly all of the behaviors of false leaders failing to do actual work which God dissected were things I myself had done. It was as if God was exposing me in person. This was especially true of the following passages: **“One characteristic of false leaders is their inability to thoroughly explain or clarify any issues involving truth principles. If someone seeks from them, they can only tell them some empty words and doctrines. When faced with problems that need resolution, they frequently respond with a statement like, ‘You are all experts in doing this duty. If you have problems, you**

**should figure them out yourselves. Don't ask me; I am not an expert, and I don't understand. Address it on your own.' ... False leaders often use reasons and excuses like 'I don't understand, I never learned it, I am not an expert' to fob people off and dodge questions. They may look quite humble; however, this exposes a serious issue with false leaders—they lack any understanding of problems involving professional knowledge in certain tasks, they feel powerless and appear extremely awkward and embarrassed. What do they do then? They can only gather several passages of God's words to fellowship with everyone during gatherings, talking about some doctrines to exhort people. Leaders with a bit of kindness might show concern for people and ask them from time to time, 'Have you faced any difficulties in your life recently? Do you have enough clothes to wear? Have there been any among you who are misbehaving?' If everyone says that they don't have those issues, they reply, 'Then there's no problem. Carry on with your work; I have other matters to attend to,' and hastily leave, fearing that someone might bring up questions and ask them to address them, putting them in an embarrassing situation. This is how false leaders work—they can't resolve any real problems. How can they effectively carry out the work of the church? As a result, the accumulation of unresolved issues eventually hinders the work of the church. This is a prominent characteristic and manifestation of how false leaders work"**

**(The Word, Vol. 5. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers (2)). "Of course, being a leader doesn't necessarily mean they need to understand every kind of profession, but they should clearly fellowship the truth principles necessary to solve problems, regardless of what kind of profession those problems relate to. As long as people understand the truth principles, problems can be resolved accordingly.**

**False leaders use ‘I’m a layman at this; I don’t understand this profession’ as a reason to avoid fellowshipping the truth principles for solving problems. This is not doing real work. If false leaders consistently use ‘I’m a layman at this; I don’t understand this profession’ as a reason to avoid solving problems, then they are not fit for the work of leadership. The best thing they should do is to resign and let someone else take their place. But do false leaders possess this kind of reason? Will they be able to resign? They won’t. They even think, ‘Why do they say I’m not doing any work? I hold gatherings every day, and I’m so busy that I can’t even have meals on time, and I’m getting less sleep. Who says problems aren’t being solved? I hold gatherings and fellowship with them, and I find passages of God’s words for them.’ ... You see, false leaders can’t do real work and yet they still provide a bunch of excuses. They’re truly shameless and disgusting! Their caliber is so poor, they don’t understand any professions, and they lack comprehension of the truth principles involved in every item of professional work—what’s the use of having them as leaders? They’re simply fools and good-for-nothings! Since they can’t do any real work, why are they still serving as church leaders? They’re simply devoid of reason. Since they lack self-awareness, they should listen to the feedback from God’s chosen people and assess whether they meet the standards for being a leader. And yet, false leaders never consider these things. Regardless of how much of the church’s work has been delayed, and how much loss has been inflicted on the life entry of God’s chosen people during their many years of serving as leaders, they don’t care. This is the ugly countenance of out-and-out false leaders” (The Word, Vol. 5. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers (2)). God’s words cut**

me to the quick. The behaviors and characteristics of false leaders which God exposed were completely in line with my actual state. God says that false leaders will use their lack of technical knowledge as an excuse to not actually involve themselves in supervising and checking in on all aspects of work, and as an excuse for not resolving brothers and sisters' real issues and difficulties in their duties. They are satisfied to just speak words and doctrines and avoid or shirk away from dealing with specific, actual issues. That is exactly how I acted. Ever since being chosen as leader, I worried that since I didn't have technical knowledge of video production, my deficiencies would be exposed when checking in on this work. I was terrified that the brothers and sisters would see through me and that I would be embarrassed in front of everyone. To preserve my own status and reputation, I would use my lack of technical knowledge as an excuse for not participating in work discussions. I rarely bothered to inquire with my brothers and sisters regarding their issues and difficulties, fearing that I wouldn't be able to resolve their problems and would lose face in the process. Sometimes, when they asked me questions, I would just fob them off with some words and doctrines. Was I not deceiving them? Outwardly, it seemed as though I was quite busy—busy gathering, fellowshiping and seemingly resolving people's issues and doing actual work—but really I was just working to bolster my reputation and only spoke of words and doctrines. I was presenting a façade to people and, in reality, I tried to avoid dealing with the brothers and sisters' most actual issues whenever I could. Even as I clearly saw brothers and sisters saddled with issues that were influencing their states and affecting the results of their duty, I didn't have a sense of burden to resolve their issues. Instead, I used my lack of technical knowledge as an excuse to put off and shelve issues, or even cede responsibility to group leaders and have them deal with it. Reflecting upon

my behavior, I saw that I wasn't doing actual work at all. I was just acting perfunctorily, going through the motions and being deceptive. As a leader, was I not what God calls a "fool" and a "good-for-nothing"? I held the title of leader, but I didn't have the slightest bit of responsibility, only acted to maintain my own reputation and status, didn't do any of the actual work that I should as a leader and didn't fulfill any of the responsibilities I should fulfill, all of which severely affected the video production work. I was an out-and-out false leader and was not deserving of any trust whatsoever. Having realized all this, I felt incredibly regretful and prayed to God in repentance, "O God, I know my actions have been hurtful to You and left You disgusted. I am willing to repent and just ask that You guide and enlighten me so that I may know my own corruption and rebellion."

Later on, I saw a passage of God's words which said: **"Antichrists' cherishment of their reputation and status goes beyond that of normal people, and is something within their disposition essence; it is not a temporary interest, or the transient effect of their surroundings—it is something within their life, their bones, and so it is their essence. This is to say that in everything antichrists do, their first consideration is their own reputation and status, nothing else. For antichrists, reputation and status are their life, and their lifelong goal. In all they do, their first consideration is: 'What will happen to my status? And to my reputation? Will doing this give me a good reputation? Will it elevate my status in people's minds?' That is the first thing they think about, which is ample proof that they have the disposition and essence of antichrists; they would not consider these problems otherwise. It can be said that for antichrists, reputation and status are not some additional requirement, much less something extraneous that they could do without. They are part of the nature of antichrists, they are in their**

**bones, in their blood, they are innate to them. Antichrists are not indifferent toward whether they possess reputation and status; this is not their attitude. Then, what is their attitude? Reputation and status are intimately connected to their daily lives, to their daily state, to what they pursue on a daily basis. And so for antichrists, status and reputation are their life. No matter how they live, no matter what environment they live in, no matter what work they do, no matter what they pursue, what their goals are, what their life's direction is, it all revolves around having a good reputation and a high status. And this aim does not change; they can never put aside such things. This is the true face of antichrists, and their essence"** (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Nine (Part Three)).

God revealed that antichrists highly value reputation and status and view it as their lifeblood. No matter what situation they find themselves in, or what they happen to be doing, their motive and starting point is always centered around reputation and status. Reflecting on myself, I realized I was no different. After I was chosen as leader, I didn't consider how important the work was or how I could be mindful of God's intentions and do the work well, but rather considered my own reputation and status. I worried that the other brothers and sisters would notice that I didn't understand the technical side of the work and couldn't do my work well. I even worried that I'd be exposed and replaced. Throughout my tenure as leader, I constantly worked to maintain my reputation and status, and, in order to hide my own deficiencies, I would always avoid and not inquire into any of the technical work. I worried that people would see my actual technical abilities and think that I wasn't capable of supervising the work and wasn't fit to be a leader. What's more, to hide the fact that I wasn't doing actual work and maintain my status as a leader, I busied myself holding gatherings, doing work that bolstered my reputation, speaking on



doctrine, shouting slogans, and acting perfunctorily. I tried to make an outward display of busyness and a sense of burden to mislead my brothers and sisters and trick them into believing I was doing actual work. I only engaged in this fraudulent, deceptive behavior and, as a result, the video production work was delayed. I realized I had been deeply corrupted by Satan. Satanic poisons like “People need their pride just as a tree needs its bark” and “A man leaves his name behind wherever he stays, just as a goose utters its cry wherever it flies” had become my very nature. I lived by such poisons and only considered my own reputation and status while doing my duty in my belief in God. I didn’t have the slightest care for the church’s work or the life entry of my brothers and sisters. I would even shirk from doing duties I knew I should do—how selfish, despicable, deceitful, and slick I was!

I thought about how, as a church leader, even if I didn’t have technical knowledge of video production, I still should have worked together with my brothers and sisters to resolve the actual issues we faced in our work. That was my responsibility and the very least I ought to do as a part of my duty. Yet, I wasn’t mindful of God’s intentions in the slightest and only cared about maintaining my reputation and status. I always used my lack of knowledge as an excuse to pass off, avoid and not execute actual work, which led to a delay in resolution to my brothers and sisters’ issues, prevented them from finding a path of practice and negatively affected the video production work. These were all my transgressions. I realized that God’s righteous disposition is unoffendable—my being replaced was entirely the consequence of my seeking reputation and status and walking the path of an antichrist. If I didn’t repent and transform, I would certainly be exposed and eliminated.

Later on, I came across this passage of God's words: **"In fact, as a leader, after completing work arrangements, you must keep track of the work's progress. Even if you aren't familiar with that field of work—even if you lack any knowledge of it—you can find a way to do your work. You can find someone who is knowledgeable, who understands the work in question, to check things over and make suggestions. From their suggestions you can identify the appropriate principles, and thus you will be able to keep track of the work. Whether or not you are familiar with or understand the type of work in question, at the very least you must preside over it, follow up on it, and continuously make inquiries and ask questions about its progress. You must maintain a grasp of such matters; this is your responsibility, it is part of your job. Not keeping track of the work, not doing anything more once it has been assigned—washing your hands of it—is the way false leaders do things. Not following up or providing guidance on the work, not inquiring about or resolving issues that arise, and not grasping the progress or efficiency of the work—these are also manifestations of false leaders"** (The Word, Vol. 5. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers (4)). God's words helped me realize that one does not need to understand and be capable of everything to be a church leader. Regardless of whether leaders and workers have technical know-how, they should still actively participate in the work, keep track of progress, supervise, identify issues in a timely manner and resolve them. This is the attitude they should have toward their duty and is what God demands of leaders and workers. I thought of certain leaders and workers in the church that were in charge of certain areas of work requiring technical skills—despite their having certain deficiencies and shortcomings, they bore a burden in their work, were able to supervise and keep track of work

progress in a timely manner, placed emphasis on guiding brothers and sisters to do their duties according to principle, and would work together with brothers and sisters to complement their respective strengths and weaknesses. Gradually, they would start to learn certain technical skills, as well as truth principles, and the results they achieved in their duty steadily improved. This led me to recall the story of Noah. When Noah set out to build the ark, he had actually never built an ark before and didn't even know what an ark might look like. Yet, he was pure of heart, bore a burden and was mindful of God's intentions. When God told him to do something, he would act according to His demands. In the end, the ark came together bit by bit and Noah successfully carried out God's commission. As for me, how did I treat my duty? As a church leader, I didn't consider how to be mindful of God's intentions, get the church's work done well and fulfill my duty, and instead sat perched in my position as leader and always sought ways to portray myself as being better and more capable than others. Afraid that if I took part in technical work my deficiencies and shortcomings would be revealed and the brothers and sisters would look down on me, I always used my lack of knowledge in the technical aspects of video production as an excuse to get out of participating—what an arrogant hypocrite I was! It was only then that I realized that what one assumes as a leader is not a title or status, but a responsibility and burden. I had to appropriately confront my own deficiencies and shortcomings and get rid of my obsession with the title and status of the position of leader. I had to care for God's intentions, have a burden for the church's work, collaborate harmoniously with my brothers and sisters to complement our respective strengths and weaknesses and get the church's work done well. I wasn't familiar with certain technical aspects of the work, but I could seek out brothers and sisters that were and seek and discuss together with them. I

could ask them to provide more suggestions and ideas and have everyone work together to seek paths of practice and resolve our issues. Working in this way would allow all aspects of the work to proceed normally. If we still couldn't resolve our issues after seeking and discussion, we could ask for help from the upper leadership—this would ensure that any problems in our work would be identified and resolved in a timely manner and would not cause delays in the church's work. This was what I should and was completely capable of doing. I should have a responsible attitude toward the church's work and do everything I could to accomplish what I was able to. Only in so doing would I be fulfilling my duty and responsibility. I realized that in the past, I put too much emphasis on reputation and status. I always used my lack of technical knowledge as an excuse, actively worked to maintain my reputation and status, and ultimately caused delays in the church's video production work.

Later on, I came across this passage of God's words: **“For all who perform a duty, no matter how profound or shallow their understanding of the truth is, the simplest way to practice entering into the truth reality is to think of the interests of God's house in everything, and to let go of one's selfish desires, personal intents, motives, pride, and status. Put the interests of God's house first—this is the least one should do. If a person who performs a duty cannot even do this much, then how can they be said to be performing their duty? That is not performing one's duty. You should first think of the interests of God's house, be considerate of God's intentions, and consider the work of the church. Put these things first and foremost; only after that can you think about the stability of your status or how others regard you. Do you not feel that this becomes a little easier when you divide it into two steps and make some compromises? If you**

**practice like this for a while, you will come to feel that satisfying God is not such a difficult thing. Furthermore, you should be able to fulfill your responsibilities, perform your obligations and duty, and set aside your selfish desires, intents, and motives; you should show consideration for God's intentions, and put the interests of God's house, the work of the church, and the duty that you are supposed to perform first. After experiencing this for a while, you will feel that this is a good way to comport yourself. It is living straightforwardly and honestly, and not being a base, vile person; it is living justly and honorably rather than being despicable, base, and a good-for-nothing. You will feel that this is how a person should act and the image that they should live out. Gradually, your desire to satisfy your own interests will lessen"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Freedom and Liberation Can Be Gained Only by Casting Off One's Corrupt Disposition). Pondering over God's words, I realized that no matter what duty we are doing, we should always set our intentions right, put aside personal desires, or aspirations for reputation and status, and strive to maintain the church's work. We mustn't worry about what others think of us, but should be able to accept God's scrutiny and fulfill our responsibilities—only in so doing can we live straightforwardly and honestly. I thought about how being selected as a leader was just an opportunity for me to practice and did not mean I was fully qualified for the position. I still had to continuously seek the truth in the process of doing my duty and work together with my brothers and sisters in order to do my duty well. Yet, I was too rebellious, only considered my status and reputation and failed to do actual work, all of which caused losses to the church's work and led to my replacement. After I came to understand God's intentions, I resolved to act according to God's

words in my duty going forward, to stop considering my reputation and status and fulfill my duty to satisfy God.

Soon after that, the church assigned me to water newcomers and, after a few months, I was promoted to group leader. Once again, I couldn't help but worry: "I haven't been watering newcomers for very long, lack experience and my ability to water newcomers is no better than the other brothers and sisters. Will I really be able to serve as an effective group leader? If I don't do my job well and can't recommend actual paths of practice for my brothers and sisters, will they think I'm unqualified to serve as a group leader? Will my leader think I lack caliber and competency?" I realized I was once again desiring to maintain my reputation and status. I thought of the lessons I learned from my past failure and hurriedly came before God in prayer. After finishing my prayer, I saw this passage of God's words: **"You must seek the truth to resolve any problem that arises, no matter what it is, and by no means disguise yourself or put on a false face for others. Your shortcomings, your deficiencies, your faults, your corrupt dispositions—be completely open about them all, and fellowship about them all. Do not keep them inside. Learning how to open yourself up is the first step toward life entry, and it is the first hurdle, which is the most difficult to overcome. Once you have overcome it, entering the truth is easy. What does taking this step signify? It means that you are opening your heart and showing everything you have, good or bad, positive or negative; baring yourself for others and for God to see; hiding nothing from God, concealing nothing, disguising nothing, free of deceit and trickery, and being likewise open and honest with other people. In this way, you live in the light, and not only will God scrutinize you, but other people will also be able to see that you act with principle and a degree of transparency.**

**You do not need to use any methods to protect your reputation, image, and status, nor do you need to cover up or disguise your mistakes. You do not need to engage in these useless efforts. If you can let these things go, you will be very relaxed, you will live without constraints or pain, and you will live entirely in the light”** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Part Three). Reading God’s words helped me gain clarity and gave me a path of practice. I shouldn’t disguise and conceal my deficiencies and shortcomings for the sake of reputation and status. Rather, I should have a proper attitude toward my deficiencies, practice being an honest person, carry out as much as I understand, and fulfill my duty and responsibility. After that, I actively kept track of the work’s progress and when I encountered issues that I lacked knowledge of or was incapable of handling myself, I would seek with my brothers and sisters to resolve the problem together. Each time the brothers and sisters had gatherings for discussions, I would diligently learn from them and absorb useful paths of practice they mentioned. I would also often arm myself with the truth of visions. After practicing this way for a period of time, I gradually came to grasp some principles, my performance in my duty gradually improved and I felt peaceful and at ease.

In my reflection on this experience of being replaced, God’s words have enlightened and guided me, instilling me with knowledge of the truth of my striving for reputation and status and the consequences of such actions. His words have also helped rectify my fallacious viewpoints. This is all God’s love and salvation!

## 72. The Path to the Kingdom of Heaven

By Marcelita, the Philippines

When it comes to getting into the kingdom of heaven, many people think, “Since we have faith in the Lord and our sins have been forgiven, when the Lord comes He’ll rapture us straight into His kingdom.” Then there are those who believe that only the holy can see the Lord, thinking, “We still can’t help sinning constantly—we haven’t cast off the fetters of sin, so can we truly get into the kingdom of heaven?” To this question, some may say, “In spite of our sinfulness, the Lord Jesus is our eternal sin offering, so He will forgive us as long as we confess our sins to Him. He won’t see us as sinful then, and we’ll be able to enter His kingdom.” But I don’t think this way, because the Bible says: **“For if we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remains no more sacrifice for sins”** (Hebrews 10:26). This proves that the sin offering is finite. Those who know of the true way and yet still sin will not receive God’s salvation. So just how are we supposed to enter into the kingdom of heaven? I could never figure this out—it wasn’t until I read Almighty God’s words that I found the path of purification and entry into God’s kingdom.

I was born into a Christian household, and attended services with my parents from a young age. I also actively participated in the church’s activities. As an adult, I expended myself for the Lord even more zealously. Sometimes I’d accompany the pastor to hold out-of-town prayer meetings. But despite all my enthusiasm, I wasn’t getting any satisfaction from the services. The pastor’s sermons were always on the same old things. There was no new enlightenment. And personally, I often wasn’t able to live by the Lord’s teachings. I was always caught up in a cycle of sinning and confessing. For example, when I saw that my mom gave my siblings



presents or money but rarely gave me anything, I'd become jealous and angry and complain about her. In my service for the church, whenever the pastor gave me tasks, I'd think that he must be favoring me and looking kindly upon me. I'd be filled with pride and even look down on the other co-workers. The Scriptures say: "Follow peace with all men, and holiness, without which no man shall see the Lord" (Hebrews 12:14). But I was still filled with jealousy, hatred, and condescension. I couldn't get along well with my family, much less love others as myself and achieve harmony with all men. The Lord is holy; could someone like me really receive His commendation and get into His kingdom? I was really confused, so I sought help from the pastor and other church members. But the pastor just said, "As believers, our sins have been forgiven. The Lord Jesus' sin offering is effective forever. So for all our sins committed in the past and in the future, as long as we pray and confess to the Lord, He'll forgive us unconditionally. Then the Lord will see us as without sin and we'll be allowed into His kingdom. We must have faith in the Lord." Yet hearing the pastor's words didn't resolve my confusion. The Lord forgives our sins, but why does the Bible also say, **"For if we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remains no more sacrifice for sins"** (Hebrews 10:26)? This proves that the Lord won't forgive our sins unconditionally forever. I hadn't gained any clarity, and could only console myself by thinking: The Lord's love is boundless and infinite, so maybe the pastor is right. As long as I continue to pray and confess, the Lord won't hold those sins against me, and when He comes He'll rapture me into the kingdom of heaven. After that, I just kept reading the Bible and attending services, hoping that I'd get into the Lord's kingdom when He came.

I later met two sisters online. We often chatted, encouraging and motivating each other in our faith and sharing our thoughts. One day, one of

them asked me, “What is your greatest hope as a believer?” Without the slightest hesitation, I said, “Getting into God’s kingdom, of course!” Then she asked, “So do you know what kind of people can get into God’s kingdom?” When she said that, I thought to myself, “This is exactly what I’ve been confused about. The pastor and church members all say that by believing in the Lord and by being baptized in His name, our sins are forgiven and we can enter the kingdom of heaven. Does her question mean she has a different opinion?” Then she said, “I used to think that in our faith, as long as we accept the Lord’s name, and pray and confess in His name, then the Lord will forgive our sins. Then, when He comes, He’ll rapture us into the kingdom of heaven. But later I realized that even though our sins are forgiven by believing in the Lord, we’re still prone to sinning and resisting Him. For instance: the Lord requires that we love others as ourselves, practice forbearance, and be salt and light to glorify Him, but we’re always getting caught up in arguments over petty little things. We blame the Lord and betray Him in the face of disasters and trials. We only work and expend ourselves to receive blessings and enter His kingdom. This is trying to make a transaction with the Lord. Living this way isn’t remotely in accord with the Lord’s intention. The Scriptures clearly state: **‘You shall therefore be holy, for I am holy’** (Leviticus 11:45). **‘Truly, truly, I say to you, Whoever commits sin is the servant of sin. And the servant stays not in the house for ever: but the son stays ever’** (John 8:34–35). God is holy and righteous, and the kingdom of heaven is under His rule. It’s a holy land. God will not allow the filthy to sully His holy land. Those who are always sinning, resisting, and rebelling against the Lord are still servants to sin, and absolutely cannot get into God’s kingdom.” Having listened to the sister’s fellowship I said, “You’re right. In our faith, we often lie and sin and can’t free ourselves from sin. I’ve experienced this quite

profoundly. It's always really confused me. Can we really enter God's kingdom like this? I've sought out the advice of my pastor and other church members, but I never got a satisfactory answer. Through your fellowship, I'm finally gaining some understanding. Those who are always sinning and haven't been purified can't enter into God's kingdom. But I still don't understand, why do we keep sinning when, as believers, the Lord has forgiven us?"

In response to my question, the sister read a few passages of Almighty God's words: **"For all that man may have been redeemed and forgiven of his sins, it can only be considered as God not remembering the transgressions of man and not treating man in accordance with his transgressions. However, when man, who lives in a body of flesh, has not been set free from sin, he can only continue to sin, endlessly revealing his corrupt satanic disposition. This is the life that man leads, an endless cycle of sinning and being forgiven. The majority of mankind sin in the day only to confess in the evening. This way, even though the sin offering is forever effective for man, it will not be able to save man from sin. Only half the work of salvation has been completed, for man still has a corrupt disposition. ... It is not easy for man to become aware of his sins; he has no way of recognizing his own deeply rooted nature, and he must rely on judgment by the word in order to achieve this result. Only thus can man gradually be changed from this point onward"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. The Mystery of the Incarnation (4)). **"Though Jesus did much work among man, He only completed the redemption of all mankind and became man's sin offering; He did not rid man of all his corrupt disposition. Fully saving man from the influence of Satan not only required Jesus to become the sin offering and bear the sins of man, but it also required God to do**

**even greater work to rid man completely of his satanically corrupted disposition. And so, now that man has been forgiven of his sins, God has returned to the flesh to lead man into the new age, and begun the work of chastisement and judgment. This work has brought man into a higher realm. All those who submit under His dominion shall enjoy higher truth and receive greater blessings. They shall truly live in the light, and they shall gain the truth, the way, and the life”** (The Word, Vol. 1.

The Appearance and Work of God. Preface). Having read the word of God, she then shared fellowship with me: “During the Age of Grace, the Lord Jesus only did the work of redemption, not the work of mankind’s purification and transformation. We all know that late in the Old Testament Age of Law, people were in danger of execution for not abiding by the law. Then God personally became flesh and was crucified as a sin offering for mankind, redeeming man of his sins. So long as people confessed and repented to the Lord, their sins could be forgiven, and they could enjoy the abundant grace, peace and happiness bestowed by the Lord. This forgiveness of sins refers to no longer being put to death under the law. It doesn’t mean that man is free of sin, still less does it mean that man will never sin again. Our sins are forgiven through our faith, but our sinful nature is still deeply rooted within us. We’re full of satanic dispositions like arrogance, deceit, and evil. For example, we even go against our own conscience, lying and cheating, to protect our own interests. If people don’t act the way we want them to, we get angry and reproach them. We compete for status and seek profit, we’re jealous and quarrelsome. We also pursue evil worldly trends and savor the enjoyments of the flesh. And so on. We know that sinning isn’t in keeping with the Lord’s intention and we often come before the Lord to repent and confess, but then we just keep sinning. All of this is the result of our satanic nature. If we don’t resolve the root of our sinful nature, then our sins will be

like weeds cut at the stalk, growing right back from the root. Therefore, God in the last days is carrying out the work of judgment, thoroughly resolving our sinful nature, cleansing and transforming our corrupt dispositions, so that we no longer sin or resist God. This is the only way to be worthy of the kingdom of heaven.”

After listening to the sister’s fellowship, I understood that forgiveness of sins just means the Lord Jesus has forgiven our sins, not that we aren’t sinful. Nor does it mean that the Lord will pardon our sins without limit, like my pastor had claimed. The sister’s fellowship was so practical, and completely in line with the Bible: **“For if we sin willfully after that we have received the knowledge of the truth, there remains no more sacrifice for sins”** (Hebrews 10:26). What the pastor said used to leave me so confused. The Lord is holy. Will He really take us into His kingdom even though we sin all the time? I couldn’t figure it out, so I just trusted what the pastor said and kept studying the Bible, praying and confessing, and hoping that when the Lord came He wouldn’t look at our sins but take us straight into His kingdom. Thinking back now, that was a truly far-fetched notion. The sister had said that the Lord would perform the work of judgment to purify man at His return, so I rushed to ask her exactly how God will perform this work. She patiently replied, “The Bible contains many prophecies about this. For instance: **‘I have yet many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. However, when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth’** (John 16:12–13). **‘He that rejects Me, and accepts not My words, has one that judges him: the word that I have spoken, the same shall judge him in the last day’** (John 12:48). These verses show that God will express the truth to judge and purify mankind in the last days. The Lord Jesus has now returned as the incarnate Almighty God of the last days. He expresses the truth and does the work of judgment

starting with the house of God to resolve man's sinful nature and satanic dispositions, and ultimately deliver mankind from Satan's influence." Then she showed me videos of readings of God's words. Almighty God says: **"Christ of the last days uses a variety of truths to teach man, to expose the substance of man, and to dissect the words and deeds of man. These words comprise various truths, such as man's duty, how man should submit to God, how man should be loyal to God, how man ought to live out normal humanity, as well as the wisdom and the disposition of God, and so on. These words are all directed at the substance of man and his corrupt disposition. In particular, the words that expose how man spurns God are spoken in regard to how man is an embodiment of Satan, and an enemy force against God. In undertaking His work of judgment, God does not simply make clear the nature of man with a few words; He exposes and prunes over the long term. All these different methods of exposure and pruning cannot be substituted with ordinary words, but with the truth of which man is utterly bereft. Only methods such as these can be called judgment; only through judgment of this kind can man be subdued and thoroughly convinced about God, and moreover gain true knowledge of God. What the work of judgment brings about is man's understanding of the true face of God and the truth about his own rebelliousness. The work of judgment allows man to gain much understanding of the intentions of God, of the purpose of God's work, and of the mysteries that are incomprehensible to him. It also allows man to recognize and know his corrupt essence and the roots of his corruption, as well as to discover the ugliness of man. These effects are all brought about by the work of judgment, for the essence of this work is actually the work of opening up the truth, the way, and the life of God to all those who have faith in Him. This work is the work**

**of judgment done by God”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Christ Does the Work of Judgment With the Truth). **“By means of this work of judgment and chastisement, man will fully come to know the filthy and corrupt essence within his own self, and he will be able to change completely and become clean. Only in this way can man become worthy to return before the throne of God. All the work done this day is so that man can be made clean and be changed; through judgment and chastisement by the word, as well as through refinement, man can purge away his corruption and be made pure”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. The Mystery of the Incarnation (4)).

The sister fellowshipped with me after the videos: “In the last days, Almighty God mainly uses the truth to judge and reveal corrupt mankind’s satanic nature and the various satanic dispositions that resist and sin against Him. At the same time, He also makes clear all the truths that we should practice in our faith—for example, how to create a normal relationship with God, how to live out normal humanity, how to love and submit to God, how to believe in and serve God in line with His intentions, and more. Through the judgment and chastisement of God’s words, we can see how deeply we’ve been corrupted by Satan, and how we are replete with satanic dispositions like arrogance, deceit, and evil. We don’t live out the slightest semblance of humanity, but are embodiments of Satan and unworthy to live before God. We can also know God’s righteous disposition that brooks no offense, start to hate and despise ourselves and repent to God. Then our corrupt dispositions can gradually be transformed, and we will have some fear of God, and submission to Him.” After that, she went on to share some of her experience. She said that previously in her faith in the Lord, she’d thought that since she had expended herself, given up a lot, experienced hardships and paid a price for the Lord, she loved the Lord most and was

better than other people. She'd use this as capital and look down on others, thinking that she was most fit to be crowned and rewarded. After receiving Almighty God's work of the last days, she read God's words judging and exposing mankind. She saw the following passage: **"It would be best for you to dedicate more effort to the truth of knowing the self. Why have you not found favor with God? Why is your disposition abominable to Him? Why does your speech arouse His loathing? As soon as you have demonstrated a bit of loyalty, you sing your own praises, and you demand a reward for a small contribution; you look down upon others when you have shown a modicum of submission, and become contemptuous of God upon accomplishing some petty task. ... Knowing full well that you believe in God, you nevertheless cannot be compatible with God. Knowing full well that you are utterly without merit, you persist in boasting all the same. Do you not feel your sense has deteriorated to the point that you no longer have self-control?"** (The Word,

Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Those Who Are Incompatible With Christ Are Surely Opponents of God). She had been anguished and ashamed after reading this. She had realized then that her consistently self-aggrandizing and condescending attitude to others, her belief that she was worthy of being crowned, was entirely due to her arrogant satanic nature. She realized that her expending was not to submit to God, but was instead done to receive blessings and make a transaction with God. She came to understand her arrogant, satanic disposition, as well as the impurity of her faith. She saw she was full of satanic dispositions and yet still shamelessly and unreasonably expected to be blessed and gain entry to the kingdom of heaven. She came to hate and despise herself, and no longer thought she was any better than anyone else. She didn't dare brag about her love for God or demand that He give her rewards and crown her. Instead, she was aware she should accept the



judgment and chastisement of God's words in good faith, seek to cast off her corrupt disposition, and do her best to fulfill her duty as a created being. After hearing her fellowship, I had a better understanding of how God performs His work of judgment in the last days. I thought her experiential testimony was very practical and very helpful for me. I thought about how I was just the same—the pastor had favored me and entrusted me with tasks, so I'd believed myself to be better than my brothers and sisters and looked down on them. At home, I'd always thought everyone's lives should revolve around me. That was my own arrogant disposition. I figured I could also be purified and transformed through God's judgment and chastisement in the last days. We chatted until it was late that night, and I gained a lot of spiritual sustenance and satisfaction.

Later on, I did an extensive reading of Almighty God's words and found that not only do God's words unveil the truth behind mankind's corruption and the mysteries of God's work, but also detail how to cast off corrupt dispositions, how to live a meaningful life, and many other aspects of the truth. I realized that Almighty God's words are the truth and the voice of God. I became absolutely certain that Almighty God is the returned Lord Jesus and formally accepted Almighty God's work of the last days. I look back on those years believing in the Lord while living in sin and being powerless to extract myself from its clutches—I was so confused about how to enter into the kingdom of heaven. Now I've finally found the path to purification and the kingdom of heaven! Thanks be to Almighty God!

## 73. Facing a False Report

By Liu Na, China

I received a report letter one day in which brothers and sisters claimed that a church leader named Sister Chen Mo was failing to bear a burden in her duty, was unable to resolve people's issues, didn't do real work and was a false leader. After reading the letter, I made haste to set up a meeting with the brothers and sisters of that church to get a better understanding of how they assessed Chen Mo. But the reality of the situation didn't line up with the contents of the letter. The brothers and sisters in that church all said that Chen Mo shouldered responsibilities in doing her duty, actively carried out all the church's projects, was able to promptly resolve people's issues and could be said to be doing real work. I thought to myself: "The report letter misrepresented the situation in this church. What's going on here?"

Later on, when I looked into the issue further, I learned that the report letter had been written by two church members named Zhao Hui and Liu Ying. Their reason for writing the report was that on one occasion they had seen a watering deacon arrive late for watering newcomers, and when they reported this to Chen Mo she hadn't rebuked the deacon—having learned that he had been late on account of attending to other urgent projects at the time, but was never late again. Zhao and Liu didn't consider the circumstances and just seized upon the opportunity to judge Chen Mo for not resolving issues, protecting other ranking members and failing to do real work. Moreover, Zhao and Liu wouldn't let the matter go. They often judged Chen Mo and other deacons during gatherings, saying that they were just protecting each other, that they were not doing real work, and that they were false leaders and workers. This disruption impacted church life and Chen Mo herself sunk into negativity, which further impeded the church's

work. When I heard about Zhao and Liu's behavior I was reminded of how, when I was a leader in that church a few years earlier, the two of them had teamed up to attack leaders and workers and even called the expulsion of an antichrist "unjust." The way they were stirring things up was deeply disruptive to church life. Back then, I had just become a leader. It was my first time handling such a situation and I was still relatively new to the faith, so I felt quite constrained and didn't dare expose them or impose restrictions. The resulting commotion rumbled on for over half a year. It was only when a higher-level leader came and gave fellowship, exposing the nature and consequences of their evil behavior, that they quit stirring up trouble. Because they stopped disrupting church life and claimed that they were ready to repent, they were allowed to stay in the church under supervision. But as it turned out, they were once again causing trouble and disturbances, attacking and judging leaders and workers. Zhao and Liu would often find fault with and condemn leaders and workers, creating chaos within the church and remaining unwilling to repent. Considering their consistent behavior, it was clear that they had the nature essence of evil people. Realizing this, I thought: "This time, I must thoroughly expose and restrict them. I can't let them keep doing evil and disrupting the church." But then I also thought: "They like to find fault with leaders, and stir up trouble. What if they catch me saying the wrong thing or making a slipup?" I thought about how, previously, when I was processing an antichrist's case, the antichrist reported me twice. What would the brothers and sisters think of me if Zhao and Liu reported me and distorted the facts of the situation? Would they suspect that there was something wrong with me or that I was a false leader, given that I had been the subject of repeated reports? What if I were dismissed because of this? The more I thought about it, the more fearful I became, and I couldn't work up the courage to

confront them. I happened to have a lot of other work going on at the time, so I kept putting off the processing of the report letter.

About ten days later, the senior leaders wrote to me asking about my progress with the report letter. When I told them that I still hadn't fellowshiped with Zhao Hui and Liu Ying, the leaders urged me to handle the matter as quickly as possible. I realized that it would be incredibly irresponsible of me if I didn't resolve the situation right away, so I decided to write to Zhao and Liu to arrange a time to meet with the two of them and verify their evil behavior. To my surprise, the very next day, I received another letter from them, reporting Chen Mo for failing to do real work and not resolving real issues. Some of the letter's contents distorted the facts, and some of it needed to be asked about and verified. Seeing how evil they were and how they reported and framed Chen Mo with such an uncompromising attitude, I became a bit fearful and thought: "What will I do if they team up to attack me when I expose them face-to-face? What if they find fault in my work or submit a report letter completely misrepresenting the facts?" The more I thought about it, the more scared I became. Feeling helpless, I prayed to God: "Dear God, faced with evil people disrupting church life, I know I should make a stand and expose them to protect the church's work, but I feel timid and fearful. Please guide me to practice the truth and not be constrained by these evil people." I then saw a passage of God's words that says: **"Antichrists have extremely vicious dispositions. If you try to prune them or expose them, they will hate you and sink their teeth into you as if they were venomous snakes. You won't be able to swing or shake them off no matter how hard you try. When you encounter such antichrists, do you feel afraid? Some people do get scared and say, 'I don't dare prune them. They are so fierce, like venomous snakes, and if they wrap their coils around me,**

**I'm finished.' What kind of people are these? They are too small of stature, they aren't good for anything, they aren't Christ's good soldiers, and they cannot bear witness to God. So, what should you do when you encounter such antichrists? If they threaten you or try to take your life, would you be afraid? ... People always fear that antichrists will find leverage to retaliate against them. But aren't you afraid of offending God and incurring His spurning? If you're afraid of an antichrist finding leverage to retaliate against you, why not seize the proof of that antichrist's evil deeds to report and expose them? In doing so, you will earn the approval and support of God's chosen people, and most importantly, God will remember your good deeds and acts of justice. So, why not do this? God's chosen people should always bear God's commission in mind. Cleansing evil people and antichrists away is the most crucial fight in the battle against Satan. If this fight is won, it will become an overcomer's testimony. Battling against Satans and devils is an experiential testimony that God's chosen people should have. It's a truth reality that overcomers must possess. God has bestowed so much truth upon people, has led you for such a long time, and has provided so much for you, for the purpose of you bearing witness and safeguarding the work of the church. It turns out, when evil people and antichrists do evil deeds and disturb the work of the church, you become timid and withdraw, fleeing with your arms over your head—you are a good-for-nothing. You cannot overcome Satans, you have not borne witness, and God detests you. In this critical moment, you must stand up and wage war against Satans, expose the evil deeds of antichrists, condemn and curse them, giving them no place to hide and cleansing them away from the church. Only this can be counted as gaining victory over Satans and ending their fate. You are**

**one of God's chosen people, a follower of God. You cannot be afraid of challenges; you must act according to the truth principles. This is what it means to be an overcomer. If you are afraid of challenges and make compromises because you fear retaliation from evil people or antichrists, then you are not a follower of God, and you are not one of God's chosen people. You are a good-for-nothing, inferior even to service-doers"** (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Nine (Part Eight)). God's words cut to the quick—wasn't I just like the worthless wretches that God spoke of? Given that there were evil people in the church disrupting church life, it was my job as a leader to take a stand in exposing and restricting them, so as to safeguard the work of the church. But at the key moment I became timid and shied away. Knowing that Zhao and Liu often twisted the facts, picked at people's faults and had attacked me in the past, I feared that if I offended them they'd make trouble again and retaliate against me. So, to protect myself, I put off addressing the issue and allowed them to continue criticizing and attacking leaders and workers and disrupting church life. Where was my testimony? Wasn't I shielding evil people and harming the church's interests? God abhors such behavior! Realizing this, I became disgusted with myself and my incredible selfishness. I couldn't continue being a worthless wretch, shirking my duty and shying away from conflict. I had to take a stand and safeguard the work of the church.

The next day, I called on Zhao and Liu. As soon as they saw me, they started grilling me: "What work are you doing? Are you processing a false leader case? Or did the leaders and workers send you here to fellowship with us?" When I told them I was there to verify the contents of the report letter, they began twisting facts to attack and criticize Chen Mo again, claiming that she often didn't attend group gatherings, didn't resolve brothers' and sisters' issues and failed to look after newcomers. They were

still complaining about how the watering deacon hadn't been on time for the gathering with newcomers, and said that Chen Mo didn't do real work. They even slandered her with the accusation that she had condemned and suppressed them when they mentioned some inadequacies of hers. They were being so overbearing that I began to hesitate again: "They are lacking in humanity and are always starting trouble. The leaders and deacons fellowshiped with them about Chen Mo, but they still won't let it go. If I expose them to their faces now, they might get angry and then who knows what they'll do." I felt quite perturbed and even regretted coming to deal with this report letter. I thought to myself: "I can just write a letter to the higher-level leaders to inform them of the situation and let them deal with it. That way I don't have to confront Zhao and Liu and don't have to feel all worked up about it." So, I responded in a perfunctory way to their questions and left in a hurry. Then I wrote a letter to the higher-level leaders about verification of the report letter, and about Zhao and Liu's behavior. Two days later, the leaders wrote back saying: "You've told us about the current issue with Zhao Hui and Liu Ying, but you didn't mention how you plan to deal with it. You've simply foisted the matter onto us. What are your thoughts on the situation?" I felt pretty bad after reading that. I had already established that Zhao and Liu were evil people in essence, given that they continually found fault with, criticized and attacked others, disrupted church life and refused to repent. If they were allowed to remain, the disruption to the work of the church would be even graver. According to principle, they ought to have been promptly cleansed away from the church, but to protect myself I had passed responsibility onto the senior leadership. How truly deceitful of me.

Later on, after reading the following two passages of God's words, I gained a better understanding of the nature and consequences of my actions.

God's words say: "We often fellowship about and dissect antichrists and evil people, discussing how to discern and recognize them, all for the purpose of fellowshipping clearly about the truth, and of giving people discernment against evil people and antichrists, so that they can expose them. In this way, God's chosen people will no longer be misled or disturbed by antichrists, and they can break free from Satan's influence and bondage. However, some people still have philosophies for worldly dealings in their hearts. They don't try to discern evil people and antichrists; instead, they play the role of people pleasers. They don't fight against antichrists, don't set clear boundaries with them, and choose a watered-down, middle-of-the-road approach to safeguard their own interests. They let these devils—these evil people and antichrists—remain in God's house, inviting peril by nurturing devils. They allow these devils to rampantly disturb the work of the church and the brothers and sisters from doing their duties. What role do such people play? They become a shield for antichrists and accomplices to them. Although you may not do the same things as antichrists or commit the same evil deeds, you have a share in their evil deeds—you are condemned. You tolerate and shelter antichrists, allowing them to wreak havoc around you without taking any action or doing anything. Don't you have a share in the evil of antichrists? This is why some false leaders and people pleasers become accomplices to antichrists. Anyone who witnesses antichrists disturbing the work of the church but does not expose them or set clear boundaries with them becomes a lackey and accomplice to them. They lack submission and loyalty to God. In the critical moments of battle between God and Satan, they stand on Satan's side, protecting the antichrists and betraying God. Such people are detestable to God" (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing



Antichrists. Item Nine (Part Eight)). **“There are some people pleasers in every church. These people pleasers have no discernment about evil people manipulating and sabotaging elections. Even if they do have a little discernment, they ignore it. Their attitude toward any issues that arise in church elections is ‘Let things drift if they do not affect one personally.’ They think that it doesn’t matter who becomes the leader, that it has nothing to do with them. As long as they can happily go about their daily life, they’re fine. What do you think of people like this? Are they people who love the truth? (No.) What kind of people are they? These are people pleasers, and they can also be called disbelievers. These people do not pursue the truth; they only seek to live an easy life, coveting fleshly comfort. They are too selfish and too slick. Are there many such people in society? No matter which political party is in power, no matter who is in office, they are well liked, they can handle their social relations very successfully, and they live comfortably; no matter what political movement arises, they don’t get caught up in it. What kind of people are these? These are the most deceitful, the slickest people, known as ‘slippery eels’ and ‘old snakes.’ They live by Satan’s philosophies, without a shred of principle. Whoever is in power, they cater to them, flatter them, sing their merits. They do nothing but defend their superiors, and never offend them. However much evil their superiors do, they neither oppose nor support it, but keep their thoughts hidden deep inside. They are well liked no matter who is in power. Satan and the devil kings like this sort of person. Why do the devil kings like this sort of person? Because they do not spoil the devil kings’ affairs and do not pose any threat to them. This sort of person is unprincipled and has no baseline for their comportment, and lacks integrity and dignity; they just follow the**

**trends of society and bow down before the devil kings, adapting to their tastes. Are there not also such people in the church? Can such people be overcomers? Are they good soldiers of Christ? Are they witnesses to God? When evil people and antichrists rear their heads and disturb the work of the church, can such people stand up and wage war against them, exposing, discerning, and renouncing them, putting an end to their evil deeds and bearing witness for God? They most certainly cannot. These slippery eels are not those whom God will perfect or those whom He will save. They never bear witness for God or uphold the interests of His house. As God sees them, these people are not those who follow or submit to Him, but those who blindly stir up trouble, members of Satan's gang—it is they whom He will eliminate when His work is through. God does not treasure such wretches. They have neither the truth nor life; they are beasts and devils; they are unworthy of God's salvation and of enjoying His love. So, God discards and eliminates such people with ease, and the church should promptly clear them out as disbelievers”** (The Word, Vol. 5. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers.

The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers (19)). From God's words, I learned that when antichrists and evil people disrupt church life and the church's work, God looks to see if people choose to safeguard the church's interests or their own. If they choose to protect themselves and allow evil people and antichrists to disrupt and disturb the church's work, then in God's eyes, they are slippery, deceitful, selfish and despicable. God does not perfect such people and even condemns them and eliminates them. As I pondered over God's words, I felt deeply troubled. I knew full well that Zhao Hui and Liu Ying continually disrupted church life and attacked and criticized leaders, which led to leaders being unable to do their duties properly and the church's work being impeded. However, I lived by satanic philosophies like

“Every man for himself and the devil take the hindmost,” “Sensible people are good at self-protection, seeking only to avoid making mistakes” and “The less trouble, the better,” and as a result I failed to take a stand to expose and restrict them, despite clearly witnessing their misdeeds and disruption. I worried that if I offended them they’d pick at my faults and retaliate by reporting me, so I continually avoided exposing them and shirked my duty, even going so far as to pass my duties onto senior leadership. In this way, I felt I could avoid offending them and protect myself—how selfish and deceitful of me! As a leader, it was incumbent on me to promptly take a stand and expose evil people when there was disruption to church life, so as to protect my brothers and sisters, but I wasn’t fulfilling my responsibility, much less showing my loyalty. Through these realizations, I finally saw that in letting Satan’s poisons dictate the way I lived, I lacked even the slightest semblance of humanity and was completely bereft of reason or conscience. I thought of what the Lord Jesus said: **“He that is not with Me is against Me; and he that gathers not with Me scatters abroad”** (Matthew 12:30). In the war between God and Satan, those that don’t stand with God are standing with Satan—there is no middle ground. Yet, I tried to get clever in how I dealt with the evil people, opting to pass the job onto senior leadership. I tried to stand in the middle ground, putting self-preservation ahead of matters of principle. Was this not clearly a case of standing with Satan in betrayal of God? I even thought I was being smart by not getting involved in dealing with the evil people, but I had become the victim of my own cleverness. I might not have done evil and disrupted the church like those evil people, but I had failed to promptly deal with them when I clearly saw their evil and disruption. I had indulged their misdeeds and even shielded them. I had played a part in their wrongdoing! Where was my conscience, my humanity? I wasn’t worthy of

being called human! Having realized all this, I felt regret for what I had done. I had failed to do my duty and prepare good deeds. To the contrary, I was building up a portfolio of evil deeds and if I carried on in that way, God would spurn me and eliminate me.

Afterward, I reflected on why I was so afraid of evil people and came upon two passages of God's words that reveal the truth about antichrists: **"They think God's house is the same as society, that whoever is unyielding and overbearing will be able to stand firm, that nobody will dare to touch those who are ruthless, fierce, and evil, and they believe that people who accept being pruned are all incompetent and incapable. They think that nobody will dare to touch people who have some ability, that nobody will dare to expose those people even if they make mistakes, and that they are the ironclad tough guys!"** (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Nine (Part Eight)). **"God has said: 'Without God's permission, it is difficult for Satan to touch even a drop of water or grain of sand upon the land; without God's permission, Satan is not even free to move the ants about upon the land, let alone mankind, who was created by God.' To what extent are you able to believe in these words? Fighting against antichrists and evil people reveals the size of your faith. If you have a genuine belief in God, then you have true faith. If you only have a little belief in God, and that belief is vague and hollow, then you don't have true faith. If you don't believe that God can be sovereign over all this and that Satan is under God's dominion, and you still fear antichrists and evil people, can tolerate them committing evil in the church, their disturbing and ruining the work of the church, and can make compromises with Satan or beg for its mercy in order to protect yourself, not daring to stand up and fight them, and you have become a deserter, a people pleaser, and a bystander, then you**

**lack a genuine belief in God. Your belief in God becomes a question mark, which makes your belief terribly pitiful!”** (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Nine (Part Eight)). After reading God’s words, I realized that God is sovereign over and controls all things. In God’s house, it is Christ and the truth that wield authority. No matter how antichrists and evil people run amok in the church, doing misdeeds and disrupting church life, they are just tools God uses to perfect His chosen people’s ability to discern. After playing their part, they are exposed and eliminated by God, one by one. But I didn’t recognize God’s rule and righteousness and was always afraid of offending the evil people. I believed that the more domineering and forbidding one was, in society at large, the less they would be challenged and the more successful they would be. I thought the same applied in God’s house, and if I were to offend an evil person, there would certainly be negative consequences. The house of God, to me, was like the rest of society in which “It is better for foes to reconcile with each other than to contend” and “It’s better to offend a gentleman than a scoundrel.” Under the influence of these ideas, I didn’t dare to step up and put a stop to the evil people’s disruption of church life, because I was terrified that they’d retaliate, spread rumors about me and report me as a false leader. If this led to dismissal and being unable to do my duty, then I would never have a good destination. I overestimated the power of these evil people and completely denied God’s righteousness and the fact that God reigns over all things. I thought of someone I’d once known named Sister Chen Zhengxin. When she was assigned to deal with an outbreak of disorder in one of the churches, the evil people who were disrupting that church drove her out, attacked her and did not let her attend gatherings. But in the face of those evil people, Zhengxin didn’t show the slightest fear—she relied on God to expose their misdeeds and eventually all of the evil people were expelled

from the church. As for Zhengxin, she hadn't been brought down by the evil people's attacks and continued to do her duty in the church. Her story gave me a practical sense of how truth rules in God's house, how He has mastery over all things, and how, when we do just things, God commends, protects and guides us. My experience with this report letter had also shown me how seriously the church takes the task of reviewing and verifying such letters, and how it processes them in a fair and righteous way according to the truth principles. When Zhao Hui and Liu Ying distorted the truth in their report letter, and picked at the faults of Chen Mo, the church didn't dismiss her on the basis of the letter, but first consulted the assessments of most of the brothers and sisters and got a clear sense of the situations of both the report writers and the person reported. If the report was false, the church would redress the injustice. If it was true, then it would be handled according to principle. In the past, I had been reported on twice by an antichrist, but ensuing investigations found that both reports were false and as a result the church didn't strip me of my duty. I saw that the church does everything according to the truth principles and wouldn't casually process someone's case after hearing only one side of the story. It wouldn't wrong a good person and wouldn't let evil people off the hook. Thinking on this, I felt my earlier views were preposterous—the views of disbelievers. At the same time, I realized that this situation was a test to see if I could turn toward justice, fight the forces of evil, and stand firm in my witness for God.

Later on, I recalled a passage of God's words, which says: **“In the church, stand firm in your testimony to Me, uphold the truth; right is right and wrong is wrong. Do not confuse black and white. You shall be at war with Satan and must completely vanquish it so that it never rises again. You must give everything you have to protect My testimony. This**

**shall be the goal of your actions—do not forget this”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Utterances of Christ in the Beginning, Chapter 41). Through God’s words, I learned that God loves those who are honest and have a sense of justice. Such people are capable of practicing the truth, upholding principles and protecting the church’s interests, and they are not afraid of offending people. Only such people are commended by God. Having realized this, I felt a renewed sense of faith and was ready to take a stand to safeguard the interests of the church. I thought of how, in the past, feeling constrained by evil people, I hadn’t dared to expose and restrict them, and that this led to half a year of disarray within the church, severely impacting church life and the life entry of my brothers and sisters. It was a regret I would live with forever. I knew that this time around I had to practice the truth and stop trying to protect myself, like a coward. I had to swiftly cleanse the evil people away from the church and foster discernment among the brothers and sisters, so that they wouldn’t again be misled and disturbed by evil people. After that, I met with Zhao Hui and Liu Ying, and cited their consistent behavior along with God’s words to expose and dissect their evildoing. I felt very peaceful and at ease after doing so. Soon after that, and following a vote by the brothers and sisters, the two evil people were cleared out from the church. This brought an end to a period of disarray in the church, and among brothers and sisters it fostered greater discernment of evil people. I thanked God for His righteousness, with all my heart.

Through this experience, I gained some awareness of my selfish and deceitful nature and witnessed God’s holiness and righteousness. I truly got a sense of how truth and righteousness reign in God’s house, and how no evil influence can gain a footing within. I also realized that only by practicing the truth and safeguarding church interests do we accord with God’s intentions and feel at peace. Thanks be to God!

## **74. The Consequences of Blindly Worshiping a Person**

By Wang Yin, China

In August of 2015, I was elected as a church leader. At the time, the church had some report letters that needed handling, but I had just started working in the church and had never dealt with report letters before. I wasn't familiar with the principles of dealing with report letters and didn't know how to handle them, so I felt really anxious. After that, the upper leadership put Wang Jing in charge of the report letter work. I heard that she had been in the faith for nearly twenty years and had served as a leader and now she was being assigned to supervise the report letter work. I thought to myself: "She must understand much of the truth and have the truth reality. She'll be a big help to us." After that, I found that Wang Jing provided a very lucid and rational analysis of the report letters. Not only was she able to resolve problems brought up in the report letters, she also provided clear fellowship on the truth of discernment using real-life examples and found suitable passages of God's words to address everyone's issues in their duties. This gave me a very good impression of Wang Jing and it seemed to me that she had the truth reality and I should learn as much as I could from her. After that, during gatherings, Wang Jing would discuss some difficult report letters, how others had handled them improperly and how she would rectify the issues using principles and ultimately resolve them. After a while, it seemed to me that there was no problem she couldn't solve and I unconsciously developed some admiration for her. Another time, we received a report letter that contained a very complex issue, but Wang Jing identified the crux of the issue in just a few words and quickly resolved the problem. One sister admiringly said to her: "None of us could get a handle



on this issue in this letter, and even our supervisor couldn't resolve it, but just one fellowship from you and 'problem solved.' You're the real deal." Wang Jing excitedly nodded her head, seemingly enjoying the praise, and even made some comments to us critical of the supervisor. I was vaguely aware that she seemed to be aggrandizing herself and putting down the supervisor, but then I reasoned that everything she'd said was true, so I didn't think anything more of it. Instead, I thought that if in the future I could resolve people's problems like Wang Jing, I'd certainly be able to do my duty well. Wang Jing never discussed what problems or failures she'd had in her duty, or what corruption and weakness she'd displayed and how she'd sought the truth to resolve these issues, so, over time, everyone came to admire her. I also felt that by gathering with Wang Jing, I was able to understand more of the truth. Because I wanted to be able to resolve issues like Wang Jing, I went to all the gatherings she attended to see how she analyzed the report letters, what words of God she'd relate to brothers and sisters regarding their states, and how she fellowshipped. I wrote it all down with pen and paper. After that, when I held gatherings with co-workers, most of what I fellowshipped was stuff I'd learned from Wang Jing. Seeing how the co-workers listened to my fellowship attentively and even took notes, I felt that I was a talented worker, just like Wang Jing, and that the others must have been satisfied with my work and God would commend me.

After that, I relied more and more on Wang Jing. When dealing with difficult report letters or problems with report letter workers, I didn't quiet myself before God to pray to Him and seek the truth. I thought that as soon as Wang Jing came to fellowship, all my problems would be solved. Gradually, God lost His status in my heart and Wang Jing's status loomed ever larger. I relied more upon a person than I did upon God. Over time, I

began having trouble grasping even the simplest of problems in the church work. While gathering, I was unable to fellowship the Holy Spirit's enlightenment. I spoke only of words and doctrines and couldn't resolve people's life entry problems. It felt as though God had turned His back on me, and I suffered greatly. But, at the time, I didn't reflect on myself.

Prior to one gathering, the roads were blocked due to snow and no cars could get through. Wang Jing said she couldn't make it and asked me and my partnered sister to host the gathering. When I heard that, it was like the rug had been pulled out from under me. During the gathering, I couldn't figure out the source of the church's chaos described in the report letter, and I was utterly panicked. But I didn't guide the others to pray and rely on God, to seek the truth principles within God's words; instead, I just wished that Wang Jing would show up and resolve the urgent matter at hand. When the gathering concluded, I felt guilty because it hadn't been productive and I hadn't fulfilled my duty. Still I didn't seek God's intention and just single-mindedly hoped that Wang Jing would come and resolve the issue. Another time, Wang Jing said she would host a gathering for us, but there was no sign of her the whole morning and I began to panic, terrified that she'd be unable to come just like last time. I worried I'd be unable to resolve everyone's issues if she didn't come. After lunch, I suddenly heard the door opening and I knew Wang Jing had arrived. Overjoyed that my savior had arrived, I hurriedly went out to greet her, but while walking through the courtyard I lost my balance and sprained my ankle. My ankle swelled up like a balloon and it hurt so much I couldn't walk. But I thought that since Wang Jing had arrived, I had to notify everyone to come for the gathering quickly so no one would miss out on her resolving their issues. Then I made my way to a sister's home, pushing through the pain, but just as I was about to knock on the door, I somehow lost my balance and crashed to the ground.

After struggling back up to my feet, I saw that my right palm was covered in blood and coal cinders. This string of incidents struck fear in my heart and I vaguely realized that the longing I felt while waiting for Wang Jing was a bit abnormal. Was God disciplining me? So I prayed to God, seeking an answer. After that, I saw the following passage of God's words: **"People who believe in God should submit to God and worship Him. Do not exalt or look up to any person; do not put God first, the people you look up to second, and yourself third. No person should hold a place in your heart, and you should not consider people—particularly those you venerate—to be on a par with God or to be His equal. This is intolerable to God"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. The Ten Administrative Decrees That Must Be Obeyed by God's Chosen People in the Age of Kingdom). I pondered over God's words and the many scenes of my interactions with Wang Jing played in my mind like vignettes in a movie. Ever since I'd met Wang Jing, I saw that she was talented, eloquent, good at preaching and was especially good at resolving issues. Letter after letter that left me at a loss were easily resolved through her analysis and fellowship. Unconsciously, I'd begun to worship her, thinking that by gathering with her and listening to her fellowship, I'd grasp the truth and gain insight. If I didn't gather with her, it would be as if I'd lost an opportunity to gain the truth. I began to favor gathering and fellowshiping with Wang Jing over praying to God and seeking the truth. I completely relied on Wang Jing and when issues arose, I didn't pray to God and seek the truth, but just waited for her to come fellowship and resolve them. When the roads were blocked and she couldn't come, I felt like we couldn't do the work without her. The more I reflected, the more horrified I became. Believers in God should honor Him as great. We should worship and look up to Him. No person should have a place in our hearts, but I didn't have a place in my heart for God. Instead, I

exalted the person I worshiped and made an idol of her. Though I believed in God, I was worshiping a person and had unknowingly offended God's disposition. This situation was God's reminder and protection for me. I hurriedly prayed to God and was ready to repent.

After that, I came across these words of God: **“No matter the level of a leader or worker, if you worship them for understanding a bit of the truth and for having a few gifts, and believe that they possess the truth reality and can help you, and if you look up to and depend on them in all things, and through this, you try to attain salvation, then this is foolish and ignorant of you. In the end, it will all come to nothing, because your starting point is inherently wrong. No matter how many truths someone understands, they cannot stand in the stead of Christ, and no matter how gifted someone is, this does not mean they possess the truth—so anyone who worships, looks up to, and follows other people will ultimately all be eliminated and condemned. Believers in God can only look up to and follow God. Leaders and workers, whatever their rank, are still common people. If you see them as your immediate superiors, if you feel that they are superior to you, that they are more competent than you, and that they should lead you, that they are in all ways a cut above anyone else, then you are wrong—that is a delusion. And what consequences will this delusion visit on you? It will lead you unconsciously to measure your leaders against requirements that do not conform with reality, and to be unable to treat correctly the problems and deficiencies they have; at the same time, without your knowing it, you will also be profoundly drawn to their flair, gifts, and talents, such that before you know it, you are worshiping them, and they are your god. That path, from when they start to become your role model, the object of your worship, to when you become one of their**

**followers, is one that will lead you unconsciously away from God”** (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Six). **“Some people admire anyone who can preach a profound sermon or is a good orator, and envy those who have an imposing manner when they give sermons. Is this the right view to have? Is it right to seek such a goal? (No.) What, then, is right? What kind of person should you seek to become? (One who performs their duty with their head down and their feet on the ground, who comports themselves and acts in a down-to-earth way.) That is right. You must comport yourselves and act in a down-to-earth way, in no matter departing from prayer, and in no matter departing from God’s words. Come often before God and have true fellowship with Him. These are the fundamentals of believing in God!”** (God’s Fellowship). Through God’s words, I learned that as a believer in God, we must often come before Him. In all things, we should pray to God, seek the truth, perform duties according to His demands, honor Him as great and should never worship any person. No matter their talents, their prowess in work, or their ability to resolve problems, these are all bestowed by God. It is through God’s enlightenment that people give insightful fellowship and if their fellowship spells out a path, it’s because it accords with God’s words and the truth. I can seek with them on things I don’t understand and learn from their strengths, but no matter how well they fellowship, I should ultimately accept it from God and not worship mere people. After that, I practiced according to God’s words and stopped being so entirely reliant on Wang Jing. When I had problems, I’d pray to God and seek relevant truth principles in God’s words. Sometimes if I couldn’t figure something out, I’d ask Wang Jing, but I’d consciously quiet myself before God and focus on which aspects of the truth principles she fellowshiped instead of just admiring her outright. Gradually, I started to have a more normal view of

Wang Jing and was able to resolve some issues in the report letters. Later on, Wang Jing was elected as leader of another church and I stopped being panicked when she wasn't around. During gatherings, when intractable issues came up, I would pray and look to God with the others and find a path of practice through His words. Only when I couldn't resolve the issue would I ask a leader or someone who understood the truth. Our problems were gradually resolved and I experienced some growth.

Soon after that, an upper leader wrote to tell me Wang Jing was relying on her talents in work and not pursuing the truth. She was always showing off and exalting herself so that others would admire and worship her. She wouldn't accept being pruned and didn't reflect on herself. She had been exposed for walking the path of an antichrist and had been dismissed for being a false leader. This had a profound impact on me. In my time with Wang Jing, she had already displayed these behaviors: She never discussed what corruption she revealed in her duty or what failures she had experienced. She only ever talked about her successes, as if there were no problem she couldn't solve. As a result, everyone looked up to and worshiped her. Later on, I saw this passage of God's words: **"Some people use their positions to repeatedly testify about themselves, aggrandize themselves, and compete with God for people and status. They use various methods and measures to make people worship them, constantly trying to win people over and control them. Some even intentionally mislead people into thinking that they are God so that they can be treated like God. They would never tell someone that they have been corrupted—that they too are corrupt and arrogant, not to worship them, and that no matter how well they do, it is all due to God's exaltation and that they are doing what they ought to, anyway. Why do they not say these things? Because they are deeply afraid of**

**losing their place in people's hearts. This is why such people never exalt God and never bear witness to God"** (The Word, Vol. 2. On Knowing God. God's Work, God's Disposition, and God Himself I). Seeing her in the light of God's words, I gained some discernment of Wang Jing. She would often fellowship on how she sought the truth when dealing with hardships, how she easily handled letter after difficult letter and how she helped others resolve their issues. But she rarely talked about her own aberrations and deficiencies or opened up about her corruption and weakness. She had never discussed any problem or letter that she'd misjudged or had been unable to grasp, and how that had revealed her deficiencies. She had also never talked about problems she couldn't understand, how others had helped her and what aspects of the truth principles this had led her to understand. She only let people see this perfect false front she had put up. When we worshiped and praised her, she didn't fellowship with us about not worshiping mere people, and just seemed to really relish and enjoy it. Discerning her behavior in the light of God's words, I saw that she just relied on her talents in her work and preaching, never exalted or bore witness to God and only showed herself off to mislead others, which led people to not see her corruption and deficiencies but worship and follow her. She acted in this way to earn a place in people's hearts—how treacherous and evil! But not only did I have no discernment of her behavior, I even admired her talents, expertise and ability to resolve issues. I thought she understood the truth, had the truth reality and so I worshiped her. I was so blind!

After that, I came across these passages of God's words: **"There are some people who are often misled by those who outwardly seem spiritual, noble, lofty, and great. As for people who can speak eloquently of words and doctrines, and whose speech and actions seem worthy of admiration, those who are deceived by them have never**

**looked at the essence of their actions, the principles behind their deeds, or what their goals are. Moreover, they have never looked at whether these people truly submit to God, nor have they ever determined whether or not these people genuinely fear God and shun evil. They have never discerned the humanity essence of these people. Rather, beginning with the first step of getting acquainted with them, they have, little by little, come to admire and venerate these people, and in the end, these people become their idols”** (The Word, Vol. 2. On Knowing God.

How to Know God’s Disposition and the Results His Work Shall Achieve). **“Whether people focus on shallow matters or profound issues, or on words and doctrines or reality, they do not adhere to that which they should adhere to most, nor do they know that which they most should know. The reason for this is that people do not like the truth at all; as such, they are not willing to put time and effort into seeking out and putting into practice the principles of practice found in God’s utterances. Instead, they prefer to use shortcuts, summing up what they understand and know to be good practice and good behavior; this summary then becomes their own goal to pursue, which they take as truth to be practiced. The direct consequence of this is that people use human good behavior as a substitute for putting the truth into practice, which also satisfies their desire to curry favor with God. This gives them capital with which to contend with the truth, which they also use to reason and compete with God. At the same time, people also unscrupulously put God aside, placing the idols they admire in His stead”** (The Word, Vol. 2. On Knowing God.

How to Know God’s Disposition and the Results His Work Shall Achieve). Through God’s words I saw that through my many years of faith I had always had this fallacious view: I had assumed that smart, talented people that worked and preached well and could resolve issues naturally understood the truth and



had the truth reality. I realized that I had no idea what the truth reality was. God expresses truths and does the work of judgment to cleanse people of their corrupt dispositions and allow them to enter into the truth reality and live out a real human likeness. If someone is only able to resolve others' problems and discern other people, but is unable to accept the judgment of God's words, as well as being pruned, then, no matter how talented they are, or how well they work and preach, they still don't have the truth reality. Wang Jing never spoke about knowing herself, never opened up about or dissected her corrupt disposition and didn't accept the truth and truly submit when pruned. How could she have the truth reality? She was only able to handle report letters because she had some work experience and a little more knowledge of the principles. But that didn't mean she had the truth reality. I didn't understand the truth and failed to be discerning of her. I even blindly worshiped her and took her as my idol, trying to emulate and copy her. How foolish I was. I was in great danger practicing faith like this!

Later on, I saw another passage of God's words: **"What you admire is not the humility of Christ, but those false shepherds of prominent standing. You do not adore the loveliness or wisdom of Christ, but those libertines who wallow in the filth of the world. You laugh at the pain of Christ who has no place to lay His head, but you admire those corpses that hunt for offerings and live in debauchery. You are not willing to suffer alongside Christ, but you gladly throw yourself into the arms of those reckless antichrists, though they only supply you with flesh, words, and control. Even now, your heart still turns toward them, toward their reputation, toward their status, toward their influence. And yet you continue to hold an attitude of finding the work of Christ hard to swallow and being unwilling to accept it. This is why I say that you lack the faith to acknowledge Christ. The reason you have followed**

**Him to this day is only because you had no other option. A series of lofty images are forever towering in your heart; you cannot forget their every word and deed, nor their influential words and hands. They are, in your heart, forever supreme and forever heroes. But this is not so for the Christ of today. He is forever insignificant in your heart, and forever undeserving of fear. For He is far too ordinary, has far too little influence, and is far from lofty”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God.

Are You a True Believer in God?). God’s words of judgment cut to the quick. God has been incarnated in humility and never aggrandizes Himself. He just expresses truths to save humankind. God’s humility is an expression of His honorableness, greatness and holiness. It is highly worthy of our admiration. But seeing that Wang Jing had been a leader, could solve problems and spoke with conviction and drive, I admired her. I believed in God without worshiping Him and I didn’t revere Christ’s humility and loveliness. Instead, I worshiped grand and imposing figures, thinking more of those with lofty personas, talent and the ability to work and preach. I even saw them as my idols. This truly offended God’s disposition. We shouldn’t admire and look up to any mere person: Only God is the truth and should be followed and worshiped. God’s words say: **“I say that all those who do not value the truth are disbelievers and betrayers of the truth. Such men shall never receive the approval of Christ”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The

Appearance and Work of God. Are You a True Believer in God?). I didn’t pursue the truth and didn’t have the slightest knowledge of God despite years of faith. I even idolized a corrupt person, worshiping and following her, and yet I didn’t worship Christ or focus on pursuing the truth. This was betraying God and I was acting like a disbeliever, and if I didn’t repent, God would spurn me and eliminate me!

Later on, I heard that Wang Jing had acted like Judas when arrested by the CCP. She had ratted out several brothers and sisters. When she was released, she still didn't repent and was eventually expelled from the church. I saw that even though Wang Jing had performed many duties, had talent, good preaching abilities, and could use God's words to resolve problems, because she didn't pursue knowledge of herself and accept the truth, and didn't have the slightest truth reality despite years of faith, when faced with this situation, she was thoroughly revealed and eliminated. After that, I came upon another passage of God's words: **"You must know what kind of people I desire; those who are impure are not permitted to enter into the kingdom, those who are impure are not permitted to besmirch the holy ground. Though you may have done much work, and worked for many years, in the end if you are still deplorably filthy, then it will be intolerable to the law of Heaven that you wish to enter My kingdom! From the foundation of the world until today, never have I offered easy access to My kingdom to those who curry favor with Me. This is a heavenly rule, and no one can break it! You must seek life. Today, those who will be made perfect are the same kind as Peter: They are those who seek changes in their own disposition, and who are willing to bear testimony to God and fulfill their duty as a created being. Only people such as this will be made perfect. If you only look to rewards, and do not seek to change your own life disposition, then all your efforts will be in vain—this is an unalterable truth!"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Success or Failure Depends on the Path That Man Walks). God's words state that whether one can attain salvation and enter the heavenly kingdom is not based on their talents, how much work they do or how much they preach, but rather based on whether they pursue the truth, are able to accept and submit to the judgment of God's words and achieve

transformation in their life disposition. In his faith, Peter honored God as great and sought the truth in all things. He saw attaining truth and life as being above all else, so, though he didn't do as much work as Paul, after experiencing God's judgment, he could be submissive unto death and love God to the utmost, and ultimately bore great witness for God and attained His commendation. From the road Peter walked, I found a path of practice: I would no longer admire talented people and wouldn't seek to be just like them. Rather, I resolved to earnestly pursue the truth, practice God's words, and do my duty as a created being. Only this was the right path.

After that, in doing my duty, I would focus on relying on God and seeking the truth principles. When I met talented people that were able to preach, I consciously worked on viewing them in the correct light. When their fellowship had the enlightenment of the Holy Spirit, I would accept it from God. When their ideas were in keeping with the truth principles, I would accept and obey them. If they weren't in keeping with the truth principles, I wouldn't blindly listen to them, but would rather seek the truth along with them. After practicing in this way for a period of time, I felt freer and more at ease. In my duty, I was also able to identify paths of practice and achieve some results. Thank God!

## **75. The Wages of Disguise and Concealment**

By Lilieth, Honduras

In October of 2018, I accepted the work of Almighty God of the last days. Six months later, I was elected as a watering deacon in my church. I had many difficulties when I first took on this duty, but after prayer and fellowship with my brothers and sisters, I gradually mastered some principles and achieved some results in my duty. In my spare time, I also practiced writing experiential testimony articles, I often reflected on myself, and I felt very fulfilled every day.

One day in January 2022, my leader told me, “You’ve made some progress in life entry, so we’d like to choose you to be a preacher. Would you be willing to do it?” I was a little nervous, and said, “I’ll do my best.” The leader then said, “The experiential testimony articles you wrote are very good. Only brothers and sisters who pay attention to their life entry can serve as preachers, because they can truly resolve their brothers’ and sisters’ problems and difficulties.” Hearing this from the leader made me happy. I felt like he really valued and appreciated me, so I couldn’t let everyone down, and I wanted to show them I could do this job well. After that, the leader made me responsible for the work of several churches and taught me many principles. The scope of work was larger, and there were also many tasks I was responsible for, so I was stressed and a little worried I wouldn’t be able to do it. I saw that some brothers and sisters who did the same duty as me were familiar with the work, but I was new to this duty and didn’t know how to do it. I wanted to express my difficulties, but then I thought of the compliments from my leader. I became worried and thought, “If he knew I don’t understand how to do this work, what would he think of me? Would he think I can’t do it, and that choosing me was a mistake?”

Besides, now, I am a preacher. If I am not even familiar with the work, how could I help and support the church leaders?" Thinking of this was really stressful for me, but I was too embarrassed to share my struggle with the leader.

Once when our superior leader was discussing our work with us, I saw that Sister Silvia and Brother Ricardo were very active in answering questions from the leader, and also knew how to do each aspect of the work. When the leader asked me, "Are you having any difficulties?" I thought, "We all do the same duty. If I say yes, what will the leader think of me? Will he think I am incompetent?" So, I lied and said I wasn't having any problems. Later, each time the leader met with us, I rarely spoke. Even when I did speak, I always first thought of how to answer to stop others from seeing there were many things I didn't understand and looking down on me. In this way, I kept concealing and disguising myself, I felt very restrained, and I became more and more passive in my duty. I even wanted to stop attending gatherings. But even so, I didn't want to open up about my state to the brothers and sisters. I only wanted to show my good side to others. One day, I made an appointment with two church leaders to learn about the state of work at the church. When I met them, one of them said enthusiastically, "It's great to have you in charge of our work! I enjoy having gatherings with you, and I admire you every time I hear your fellowship. I hope I can be like you in the future." The other leader said, "We feel good doing our duty with you. Your fellowship always brings us light." At the time, I wanted to tell them not to think so highly of me, that I also had difficulties in my duty, and that I got negative under pressure. But then I thought, "If I tell them the truth, will they still think so highly of me in the future? Will they still ask me if they have questions?" I struggled inside, and in the end, I didn't tell the truth. Another time, I had a meeting

with several church leaders and deacons. They said they couldn't do some jobs and were having difficulties. I comforted them, "Don't worry, we've all just started our duties. Slowly we'll pick these things up and be able to understand." On the surface, there was nothing wrong with what I said. But actually, I couldn't do the work either. I was worried they would see my real stature, so I didn't dare to speak honestly, and I just gave them a little encouragement that didn't solve their problems at all. Because I continued to conceal and disguise myself, my state was really bad, I couldn't feel the guidance of the Holy Spirit and I felt emotionally exhausted. I often thought, "Why can't I do church work like everyone else?" I knew that I should seek out my leader to resolve my difficulties, but I worried that he would think I wasn't a good fit if I talked about them. I thought back to the start, I was chosen for this duty because everyone said I paid quite a lot of attention to life entry. They must think I was someone with good caliber who pursued the truth. If they knew there were so many things I didn't understand and couldn't do church work, they would certainly think it was a mistake to choose me as a preacher. Thinking of this, I was even more afraid to speak. My state grew worse and worse, and I lived in darkness and suffering. I prayed to God, "Almighty God, I don't know how to experience this environment. I ask You to lead and guide me."

Once at a gathering, our superior leader asked us about our experience during this period. The others opened up about their corruption and shortcomings in their duties, and I found the courage to talk about my own state. The leader used his experience to help me, and said, "As leaders and workers, you don't need to understand everything to do your duty well. This idea is wrong. We are just ordinary people, so it's normal that we don't understand and can't see through some things. But if we want to be a know-it-all and can't deal with our own deficiencies correctly, and if, to maintain

our status and image, we wear masks to disguise ourselves, deceive others and never let others see our true stature, then life will be painful.” Then, the leader sent me some of God’s words: **“How can you be people who are ordinary and normal? How can you, as God says, assume the proper place of a created being—how can you not try to be a superman, or some great figure? ... Firstly, don’t give yourself a title and become bound by it, saying, ‘I am the leader, I am the head of the team, I am the supervisor, no one knows this business better than me, no one understands the skills more than me.’ Don’t get caught up in your self-appointed title. As soon as you do, it will bind your hands and feet, and what you say and do will be affected. Your normal thinking and judgment will also be affected. You must free yourself from the constraints of this status. First, lower yourself from this official title and position and stand in the place of an ordinary person. If you do, your mentality will become somewhat normal. You must also admit and say, ‘I don’t know how to do this, and I don’t understand that, either—I’m going to have to do some research and studying,’ or ‘I’ve never experienced this, so I don’t know what to do.’ When you are capable of saying what you’re really thinking and speaking honestly, you will be possessed of normal reason. Others will know the real you, and will thus have a normal view of you, and you will not have to put on an act, nor will there be any great pressure on you, and so you will be able to communicate with people normally. Living like this is free and easy; anyone who finds living exhausting has caused this themselves. Don’t pretend or put up a front. First, open up about what you’re thinking in your heart, about your true thoughts, so that everyone is aware of them and understands them. As a result, your concerns and the barriers and suspicions between you and others will all be eliminated. You’re also**



**hobbled by something else. You always consider yourself the head of the team, a leader, a worker, or someone with a title, status, and standing: If you say you don't understand something, or can't do something, are you not denigrating yourself? When you put aside these fetters in your heart, when you stop thinking of yourself as a leader or a worker, and when you stop thinking that you're better than other people and feel that you are an ordinary person, the same as everyone else, and that there are some areas in which you are inferior to others—when you fellowship the truth and work-related matters with this attitude, the effect is different, as is the atmosphere. If, in your heart, you always have misgivings, if you always feel stressed and hobbled, and if you want to rid yourself of these things but can't, then you should pray seriously to God, reflect on yourself, see your shortcomings, and strive toward the truth. If you can put the truth into practice, you will get results. Whatever you do, don't speak and act from a certain position or using a certain title. First, put all this to one side, and put yourself in the place of an ordinary person” (The Word, Vol. 3.**

**The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Treasuring God's Words Is the Foundation of Belief in God). “If, in your heart, you are clear about what kind of person you are, what your essence is, what your failings are, and what corruption you reveal, you should openly fellowship this with other people, so that they can see what your true state is, what your thoughts and opinions are, so that they know what knowledge you have of such things. Whatever you do, don't pretend or put up a front, don't hide your own corruption and failings from others, so that no one knows about them. This kind of false behavior is an obstacle in your heart, and it is also a corrupt disposition and can stop people from repenting and changing. You must pray to God, and hold up for reflection and dissection the false things,**

**like the praise others give to you, the glory they shower you with, and the crowns they bestow on you. You must see the harm these things do to you. In so doing, you will know your own measure, you will attain self-knowledge, and will no longer see yourself as a superman, or some great figure. Once you have such self-awareness, it becomes easy for you to accept the truth, to accept God's words and what God asks of man into your heart, to accept the Creator's salvation of you, to steadfastly be an ordinary person, someone who is honest and reliable, and to establish a normal relationship between yourself—a created being, and God—the Creator. This is precisely what God asks of people, and it is something that is wholly attainable to them”** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Treasuring God's Words Is the Foundation of Belief in God). After reading God's word, I began to reflect on my state during this time. When I heard the leader say I was chosen to be a preacher because I paid attention to life entry, I became proud and complacent. I felt it was because I pursued the truth and was capable of work that I was selected for such an important job. But when I actually started doing this duty, I saw that I didn't understand a lot of the work. I had no grasp of some of the principles and I felt a lot of pressure, so I often felt negative. But I didn't open up about my real state, and I deceived my leader, saying I had no problems, because I feared he would think I wasn't qualified. When I heard the church leaders praise me, and even think of me as a role model, although I knew I should open up about my corruption and shortcomings and let them know my true stature, I worried that they wouldn't think highly of me after learning the facts. Because of this I stayed silent. Even when the leaders and deacons asked me some questions that I obviously didn't know how to solve, I didn't open up and discuss things with them. I pretended to understand when I didn't and answered with perfunctory words. Time and

again, I disguised myself and gave false impressions, all because I was stuck on the title of “preacher.” I thought as a preacher, my understanding and knowledge should be greater than others, I shouldn’t have shortcomings, and I shouldn’t be negative or weak. I thought this was the only way others would look up to and approve of me. To maintain my status and image, I put on a mask to cover myself up, and I disguised myself as an uncorrupted person. Even when I felt tormented, negative, and weak, to maintain the title of “preacher” I would rather cry in secret and alone than open my heart and ask for help. This title was too difficult and tiring for me to bear. When the church selected me as a preacher, it was giving me a chance to practice and allowing me to seek and understand more truth in my duty. But I didn’t follow the right path. I used this chance to pursue fame and status. Wasn’t this going against God’s intention? God doesn’t want us to seek to be supermen or great people. God wants us to stand in the place of created beings and be common, ordinary people, pursue the truth in a down-to-earth manner, honestly face our own shortcomings, and for problems we don’t understand, open up to our brothers and sisters and seek help. This is the sense we should possess. I felt a greater sense of freedom after understanding God’s intention.

Later, I read some experiential testimonies written by some brothers and sisters that referenced God’s words that were specific to my state. Almighty God says: **“Regardless of the context, no matter what duty they do, an antichrist will try and give the impression that they aren’t weak, that they are always strong, full of faith, and never negative, so that people never see their real stature or real attitude toward God. In fact, in the depths of their heart, do they really believe there is nothing they cannot do? Do they genuinely believe that they are without weakness, negativity, or revelations of corruption? Absolutely not.**

**They are good at putting on an act, adept at hiding things. They like showing people their strong and splendid side; they don't want them to see the side of them that is weak and true. Their purpose is obvious: It is, quite simply, to keep face, to protect the place they have in people's hearts. They think that if they open up before others about their own negativity and weakness, if they reveal the side of them that is rebellious and corrupt, this will be grievous damage to their status and reputation—more trouble than it's worth. So they would rather die than admit to having times when they are weak, rebellious, and negative. And if a day does come when everyone sees the side of them that is weak and rebellious, when they see that they are corrupt, and have not changed at all, they will still keep putting on an act. They think that if they admit to having a corrupt disposition, to being an ordinary person, someone who is insignificant, then they will lose their place in people's hearts, will lose everyone's worship and adoration, and thus will have utterly failed. And so, whatever happens, they will not open up to people; whatever happens, they will not give their power and status to anyone else; instead, they try as hard as they can to compete, and will never give up”** (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Nine (Part Ten)). In another passage, God revealed the nature and consequences of people's pursuit of status. God's words say: **“You always seek greatness, nobility, and status; you always seek exaltation. How does God feel when He sees this? He loathes it, and He will distance Himself from you. The more you pursue things like greatness, nobility, and being superior to others, distinguished, outstanding, and noteworthy, the more disgusting God finds you. If you do not reflect upon yourself and repent, then God will loathe you and forsake you. Avoid becoming someone whom God finds disgusting; be a person that God loves. So,**

**how can one attain God's love? By accepting the truth obediently, standing in the position of a created being, acting by God's words with one's feet on the ground, properly performing one's duties, being an honest person, and living out a human likeness. This is enough, God will be satisfied. People must be sure not to hold ambition or entertain idle dreams, not to seek fame, gain, and status or to stand out from the crowd. Even more, they must not try to be a person of greatness or superhuman, superior among men and making others worship them. That is the desire of corrupt humanity, and it is the path of Satan; God does not save such people. If people incessantly pursue fame, gain, and status without repenting, then there is no cure for them, and only one outcome: to be eliminated"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days.

The Proper Fulfillment of Duty Requires Harmonious Cooperation). I contemplated God's word and saw that antichrists are hypocrites, who always conceal and whitewash themselves. They don't tell the truth or let others see their weak side, and they disguise themselves as people who understand the truth and have no flaws. This is to gain the praise and admiration of others so that everyone follows and worships them. Their nature is especially arrogant and deceitful. I reflected on my behavior and saw I was the same as an antichrist. I always pretended to be a know-it-all. I wanted others to look up to me, think I had good caliber, and could solve any problem, so that they'd have a place for me in their hearts, surround me, and worship me. I was so arrogant and unreasonable! Everything I thought and did was entirely against God. Especially when I saw these words from God, **"If people incessantly pursue fame, gain, and status without repenting, then there is no cure for them, and only one outcome: to be eliminated,"** I knew this was God's warning to me. If I continued down the path of seeking fame and status, I would surely be spurned by God, and I would ultimately be

eliminated. I prayed to God to say I wished to repent, didn't want to lose my chance to be saved, and was willing to pursue being a pure and honest person.

The next day, the leader told me the content to fellowship on at the next gathering, and requested that I prepare to host it. Then he asked me if I understood. As a matter of fact, I didn't really understand at the time, but I feared he would feel I had poor caliber, so I lied and said I understood. But when I actually started to do it, I didn't know which words of God I should search for. I was extremely nervous, my hands were sweating, I didn't know what to do, so I prayed to God, "Almighty God, I have been corrupted too deeply by Satan. I am still constrained by reputation and status. I can't rebel against my flesh and be honest. Please lead me in finding a way to practice." In God's word, I read: **"Some people are promoted and cultivated by the church, receiving a good chance to train. This is something good. It can be said they have been elevated and graced by God. So how, then, should they do their duty? The first principle they should abide by is to understand the truth—when they do not understand the truth, they must seek the truth, and if they still don't understand after seeking on their own, they can find someone who does understand the truth to fellowship and seek with, which will make solving the problem faster and more timely. If you focus only on spending more time reading God's words by yourself, and on spending more time pondering these words, in order to achieve understanding of the truth and solve the problem, this is too slow; as the saying goes, 'Slow remedies can't address urgent needs.' If, when it comes to the truth, you wish to make quick progress, then you must learn how to work in harmony with others, and to ask more questions and seek more. Only then will your life grow quickly, and will you be able to**

**solve problems promptly, without any delay in either. Because you have only just been promoted and are still on probation, and do not truly understand the truth or possess the truth reality—because you still lack this stature—do not think that your promotion means you possess the truth reality; this is not the case. It is merely because you have a sense of burden toward the work and possess the caliber of a leader that you are selected for promotion and cultivation. You should have this reason. If, after being promoted and becoming a leader or worker, you start to assert your status, and believe that you are someone who pursues the truth and that you possess the truth reality—and if, regardless of what problems the brothers and sisters have, you pretend that you understand, and that you are spiritual—then this is a foolish way to be, and it is the same way as the hypocritical Pharisees. You must speak and act truthfully. When you don’t understand, you can ask others or seek fellowship from the Above—there is nothing shameful about any of this. Even if you don’t ask, the Above will still know your true stature, and will know that the truth reality is absent in you. Seeking and fellowshipping are what you ought to be doing; this is the reason that should be found in normal humanity, and the principle that should be adhered to by leaders and workers. It is not something to be embarrassed about”** (The Word, Vol. 5. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers (5)). After reading God’s words, I understood that the church selected me as a preacher to give me a chance to practice, and so that I could learn how to do the work in my duty. This did not mean I was better than others or that I knew everything. I had just started this duty, so it was entirely normal that there was a lot of work I couldn’t do and I didn’t grasp the principles of. Also, that I could write experiential testimonies only meant I had some superficial experience and

understanding of God's word, not that I understood the truth and possessed its realities. I should treat my own shortcomings and deficiencies correctly, and when I didn't understand things, I needed to open up and seek fellowship with the brothers and sisters. There was nothing shameful about this. It was shameful that I pretended to understand when I didn't, and this led to many problems not being resolved in time, which delayed the work of the church. I also repeatedly lost the chance to seek the truth and lived in negativity. I was so foolish! I couldn't go on like this. I had to set my intentions right, open up, seek and fellowship with my brothers and sisters, and perform my duty well. Afterward, I consulted the leader on the things I didn't understand, or which weren't clear to me and he patiently fellowshiped with me. I was thinking much clearer. The gathering ended up being very effective, and I felt relaxed and at ease.

Now, in doing my duty, I still encounter many problems and difficulties, but I can pray and rely on God, and I often seek the help of my brothers and sisters. During meetings, I also open up about myself to my brothers and sisters and let them see my corruption and shortcomings. By doing this, I feel very at ease and secure. Thanks be to God!



## 76. A Night of Brutal Torture

By Gao Liang, China

One day in April of 2006, I went to spread Almighty God's kingdom gospel to a group of Christians, but they didn't accept it. After that, I went back to spread the gospel to them again, but they sent a dog after me. Several days later, when I was at work, two plainclothes policemen came to my workplace and forced me to take them to where I was living at the time. I realized that the Christians had likely reported me. I felt anxious and fearful—I knew that if the police were to find the books of God's words that I kept in my apartment, they would certainly arrest me. I prayed ceaselessly to God: "Oh God, if they really do arrest me today, it will be with Your permission. I'm ready to put myself in Your hands. Please protect me, give me strength and faith and guide me to stand firm in my witness." After arriving at my place, they began rummaging through all my personal possessions without providing any identification, eventually finding one copy of **The Word Appears in the Flesh**, one gospel book, and one CD player. They then proceeded to take me to the county public security bureau.

An officer asked me: "Are you a believer in Almighty God? How many people have you proselytized to? Who is your leader?" I replied: "Yes, I believe in Almighty God, but we practice faith and share the gospel of our own accord. We don't have leaders." This made him so angry that he kicked me hard in the stomach, sending me stumbling back several steps. I knew that I probably couldn't avoid being tortured and tormented after being arrested—such a day is always bound to come for those of us that live in China as believers and followers of God. I had to rely on God to get through this ordeal—I couldn't bend the knee to Satan. The officer

viciously grilled me, saying: “When did you join the church? Who gave you those books? Where does he live?” When I didn’t respond, he pulled my hands behind my back and handcuffed me to a metal chair. Just then, the Public Security Bureau chief, Chief Wang, walked in and yelled: “What the hell are you doing? Uncuff him right away!” Then, with a smile, he walked over to me, patted me on the shoulder and, affecting a sincere tone, said: “Old comrade, I only want the best for you. I know work hasn’t been easy for you. If you tell us everything you know about The Church of Almighty God, you’ll get a reward of several thousand yuan.” I realized that this was Satan’s cunning plot: The officer was trying to bait me into giving away information about the church, betraying God and selling out my brothers and sisters by offering a monetary reward. I thought to myself: “Even if you offered me a mountain of gold I still wouldn’t relent. I’ll never betray the church’s interests.” Seeing that I wasn’t convinced, he added: “If you just tell me what you know, you can even take a slice of our profits going forward.” I felt utterly repulsed by him and just ignored everything he said. When he realized I wasn’t going to say anything, he immediately turned sinister. With a scowl and in a severe tone, he said: “This one doesn’t know what’s good for him. Do what you must with him” and then stormed out of the room. One of the officers threatened me, saying: “If you don’t honestly tell us what you know, things aren’t going to end up well for you.” As he said this, he slapped me hard across the face, kicked me to the ground, then wrapped my arms behind my back and handcuffed me back onto the metal chair. I felt a little scared when I thought about what torture might be in store for me, so I silently prayed to God: “Oh God, it is entirely up to You whether I die at the hands of the police today. Please fill me with faith and strength—help prevent me from selling out my brothers and sisters and betraying You.” After concluding my prayer, I suddenly recalled the story

of Daniel. Daniel was thrown in the lion's den, but he had faith, and prayed to and relied upon God, so God closed the jaws of the lions to prevent them from harming him. I knew I too should have faith in God and stand firm in my witness for Him no matter how the police tormented me.

After that, they interrogated me on the same questions again, but I still wouldn't respond, so they dragged me into a courtyard, placed five or six books of God's words in front of me, and hung a placard around my neck that said "member of a cult." They snapped a picture of me before taking my fingerprints and bringing me into a concealed torture room. As soon as I entered the room, I could feel my blood curdle—the room was stocked full of all different kinds of torture devices. There was a high rack made of welded steel, a tiger chair and foot shackles, as well as over ten boxes large and small filled with all kinds of other torture devices. On the wall hung leather whips, bakelite rods, clamps and many other smaller torture devices I'd never seen before. There must have been over a hundred torture devices in that room. I immediately felt the hair on the back of my neck stand up, and my legs went limp. I thought to myself: "They wouldn't have brought me here if they didn't plan on torturing me. Who knows if I'll be able to make it out of here alive. Maybe if I just feed them some irrelevant information, they'll let me go and I won't have to suffer in this place. If I don't tell them anything, they'll certainly subject me to severe torture." Just then, I suddenly recalled the story of Daniel's three friends—they were thrown into a fiery furnace because they wouldn't bow to a golden idol, saying they'd rather die than betray God. God protected all three of them, with none suffering even the slightest burn. This reminded me of God's almighty sovereignty; my faith in Him was renewed. I knew that my fate, whether it be to live or die, was all within God's grasp. No matter how they tortured me, I had to rely upon God and stand firm in my witness for Him.

After that, two young officers came in and adjusted the steel rack to my height, hanging my hands from the horizontal bar so that on tiptoes my feet just touched the ground. One officer viciously growled: “We’ve wasted a whole day trying to get you to talk, now it’s time to make you suffer!” My hands and arms were holding up my entire body’s weight. My whole body felt incredibly uncomfortable. After a while, my hands and arms began to hurt more and more, as if they were being slowly ripped apart. It hurt so much that I cried out in pain. I hadn’t eaten for an entire day and I felt dizzy and nauseous. It was really more than I could take. In the midst of my suffering, I suddenly recalled God’s words: **“Perhaps you all remember these words: ‘For our light affliction, which is but for a moment, works for us a far more exceeding and eternal weight of glory.’ You have all heard these words before, yet none of you understood their true meaning. Today, you are profoundly aware of their true significance. These words shall be fulfilled by God during the last days, and they shall be fulfilled in those who have been brutally persecuted by the great red dragon in the land where it lies coiled. The great red dragon persecutes God and is the enemy of God, and so, in this land, those who believe in God are thus subjected to humiliation and oppression, and these words are fulfilled in you, this group of people, as a result”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Is the Work of God As Simple As Man Imagines?). Through God’s words, I realized that He was using the great red dragon in His service to perfect His chosen people. I was being tortured to perfect my faith—there was a special meaning to this torture—so I had to stop being so negative and weak. I prayed to God then, saying: “Oh God! No matter how they torture me or how much I must suffer, I will never sell out my brothers and sisters or betray You!” After that, I was left to hang there for about two hours.

At a little past 8 p.m., four young men wearing ski masks entered the room and one of them viciously quipped: “Well, well, how we doing? Comfortable are you?” As he said this, he took a leather whip from the wall and began lashing me across the arms with it. With each lash, it felt like the flesh was being forcibly torn from my bones—it was unbearably painful. He whipped me at least fifty or sixty times and when he got tired, another guy took over. At the time, I was a bit worried that if they whipped me so hard my arms became crippled, I’d be unable to live a normal life, so I prayed to God: “Oh God, I place everything in Your hands. Whether I become crippled or not, I submit to Your orchestrations and arrangements.” It was only after they got tired out from all the whipping that they let me down from the rack. My entire body had gone limp and I immediately fell to the floor. But they weren’t done with me yet—after that, they bound me to the tiger chair and continued interrogating me. One of the officers growled: “Don’t count on getting out of here alive if you don’t tell us the truth! Just give us an honest account of what you know and we’ll let you go. The CCP is in deadly hostility to you—it takes you believers as its sworn enemies. They want to destroy you and kill you all. This is CCP policy—they can take the lives of you believers in Almighty God without the slightest impunity!” I steadfastly replied: “I don’t know anything. There is nothing I can say to you.” Seeing that I still wasn’t cooperating, they unstrapped me from the tiger chair and made me lie on the ground. They then each took one black, 30 inch long, 3–4 inch wide bakelite rod filled with steel balls and, standing on either side of me, proceeded to viciously beat me with the rods all over my body. My body shuddered with each and every strike of those rods. I writhed in pain, screaming out in utter misery. I was having trouble breathing; there are no words to describe how excruciating that pain was. They beat me the most on my buttocks—it went

on and on, and I felt like they were beating my guts out. Enduring unbearable pain, I angrily yelled out: “You’re trying to beat me to death! You want to take my life! Why don’t you go catch some real murderers and arsonists? What laws have I broken to deserve this cruelty? Are you even human?” One of the officers became even more enraged upon hearing this and began to beat me so hard that his bakelite rod broke in two, sending the steel balls careening across the floor. All the officers broke out in a cacophony of laughter. Then through gritted teeth, an officer said to me: “You haven’t broken any laws? The CCP doesn’t allow the existence of any religious belief. The Chinese people must only believe in the Communist Party. You are the CCP’s enemies and they will destroy you, kill you and eradicate you all completely!” As he said this, they took two long whips from one of the boxes and said: “Still won’t tell us what we want to hear? Then let’s try a different flavor—see how you like the taste of this!” Then they ordered me to stand up and two of them began whipping me hard with a rapacious fury, inflicting unbearable pain. When they got tired out from whipping, two other officers took their place and continued the beating, trading off at least four times, with each beating lasting at least 30 minutes. By the end of it, I just fell paralyzed to the ground, but they pulled me right back up and continued interrogating me. When I wouldn’t say anything, they continued to whip me and kick my legs. It felt like they had broken my legs. I began to feel a bit weak and thought: “If I don’t tell them anything, they’ll keep using all different kinds of torture tactics to torment me. They might even torture me to death. But if I say anything, I’ll become a Judas and the vow I made before God would become a deceit. This would hurt God, and worse, provoke His bitter hatred.” I went back and forth in my mind—should I say something or not? Just then, I recalled Lord Jesus’ crucifixion and I remembered God’s words: “**On the road to Jerusalem,**

**Jesus was in agony, as if a knife were being twisted in His heart, yet He had not the slightest intention of going back on His word; always there was a powerful force compelling Him onward to where He would be crucified. Ultimately, He was nailed to the cross and became the likeness of sinful flesh, completing the work of the redemption of mankind. He broke free of the shackles of death and Hades. Before Him, mortality, hell, and Hades lost their power, and were vanquished by Him”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. How to Serve in Harmony With God’s Intentions). To redeem all of humankind, Lord Jesus was willing to be crucified, to be humiliated and tormented, and to offer up His own life. God’s love for humankind is so great! With this in mind, I felt deeply encouraged and made a silent vow: “I will not become a Judas and betray God, even if it means being tortured to death!” After that, they continued to threaten me, saying: “If you don’t tell us what we want to know, we’ll beat you to death and send you to the crematorium, where you’ll be burnt to ash. Either that, or we’ll send your body to the brickyard where you’ll be ground to a pulp and made into bricks.” At the time, I felt scared, but I knew that it wasn’t within their authority to say whether I’d survive their beatings. All was in God’s hands, and I was willing to submit to His orchestrations and arrangements. Just then, it suddenly occurred to me that the church’s books were still in my possession and none of my brothers and sisters knew that I’d been arrested. If the police got their hands on those books, it would be a huge loss for the church. I began to panic, so I prayed to God, “God, my own life is not important, but as keeper of the church’s books, I must ensure that those books remain safe. Yet I don’t know if I’ll make it out of here alive. I place all of these concerns in Your hands and ask that You open up a way for me.” After concluding my prayer, something miraculous happened: I no longer felt any pain from the whipping. I knew that God was helping to

allay my suffering and I was incredibly thankful to Him. When they saw that I was just lying there motionless and had stopped screaming, they hurriedly stopped their whipping. One of them slipped a finger under my nose and then nervously said: “He’s in bad shape. Take him out of here—we’ll have a real mess on our hands if he dies on our watch.” I knew that God had opened up a way for me and was watching over me, otherwise I certainly would have died in there.

Afterward, two officers dragged me out and threw me in a field, leaving me there. I lay on the ground motionless. It must have been about two in the morning. At that time, there was only one thought in my mind: I had to let my brothers and sisters know that the books had to be relocated before sunrise, so that they didn’t end up in the hands of the police. I tried to get up, but I was too badly injured. I exerted every last ounce of energy I had, but I just couldn’t stand up. I felt terribly worried and panicked, so I hurriedly prayed to God, asking Him for strength. After my prayer, I recalled a passage of God’s words: **“Do not fear, the Almighty God of hosts will surely be with you; He stands behind you and He is your shield”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Utterances of Christ in the Beginning, Chapter 26). God’s words gave me faith. After another 30 odd minutes, I tried to stand up again, and after about four or five attempts, I finally stood up. The sun hadn’t come up yet and it was still completely dark out on the roads. I dragged myself along, enduring excruciating pain as I hobbled step by step toward Brother Cheng Yi’s house. Upon arriving, I immediately told him what had happened and asked him to promptly instruct the brothers and sisters to relocate the books of God’s words. After informing him, I limped my way back to my apartment. That was about 3 in the morning. When I turned on the light, I found the place was in utter shambles. What had happened to my home? My quilts, pillows, mattress,



and clothing had all been thrown on the floor. The entire apartment had been upended. Taking stock of my own injuries, I saw that I had been badly mutilated: The flesh of my legs had stuck to the inside of my pants, and about 4 inches of my rectum had prolapsed and seemed to be necrotizing. I was in excruciating pain, my breath was labored, and I felt like I was truly on my last leg. My injuries were extremely severe—I couldn't move and couldn't even get down a gulp of water. I thought to myself: "Can I survive all these injuries? Even if I do, will I be crippled? Will I be able to function on my own going forward? My wife and kids have all been misled by the CCP's lies and are opposed to my faith. If I become disabled, they won't take care of me...." The more I thought, the worse I felt, so I prayed to God. As I prayed, I recalled God's words: **"Of everything that occurs in the universe, there is nothing in which I do not have the final say. Is there anything that is not in My hands?"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. God's Words to the Entire Universe, Chapter 1). Indeed, my fate was in God's hands. It was all for God to decide whether I would live or die and whether or not I would be disabled. I knew I should give myself over to God and let Him preside over arrangements. Even were I to become disabled, I would submit. Even if my wife and children wouldn't take care of me, I knew that God was with me and my brothers and sisters would look after me, so I would survive all the same. Realizing this, I didn't feel so tormented and agonized.

Brother Yu Zhijian arrived at my house at 4 a.m. that morning. When he came in, seeing that I was lying on my bed unable to move, he pulled back my blanket only to find my pants covered in bloody stains, my lower limbs laced with deep gashes and gaping flesh, and my rectum and pieces of flesh stuck to my pants. At the sight of this, he broke down in tears and brought me a basin of hot water, crying as he came. After cutting open my

pants and applying a hot compress, he slowly separated the pants from my flesh, piece by piece. The skin below my knees was a mess of open wounds so deep that the bone was exposed. To this day, I still can't bring myself to recall that ordeal. I had very serious injuries, but didn't dare go to the hospital out of concern that the police would find me and arrest me when I checked in with my ID. I would also be putting my brothers and sisters at risk. During that time, I couldn't take care of myself at all, and Zhijian risked being arrested to come and look after me every day. He was new to the faith and I worried that he would become frightened and weak after seeing how I'd been beaten. I told him: "Going through this ordeal was a good thing for me—it has allowed me to see Satan for what it really is." To my surprise, Zhijian said: "Don't worry about me. I've now seen for myself that the CCP is a demon that resists God and inflicts cruelty on mankind. We must stand firm in our witness for God." Over the course of that week, I cleaned the prolapsed portion of my rectum every day with salt water and took a folk remedy as well. Finally, on around the eighth day after being arrested, the prolapse healed. After two weeks, I was able to walk again.

After that, the police would come to interrogate and harass me every 15 days. Each time, they would grill me with questions about the church and ask me if I was still in contact with other members. They even threatened me, saying: "If you don't come clean, we'll never drop your case!" I thought to myself: "I already see you all for what you really are. No matter how you coerce or threaten me, I'll never give in to you. You can forget about trying to get me to betray God!" In the brief two years between being arrested in 2006 until 2008, the police came to interrogate me at least 25 times. Because they were continually monitoring me, I didn't dare meet with brothers and sisters for fear of getting them in trouble, so I was forced to return to my family's home in the country.

Later on, my rectum and back completely healed, but I continued to experience residual effects from the injuries sustained to my legs. I still have a lot of soreness and weakness in my right leg and I develop a limp in cloudy or rainy weather. The worst residual effects have been with my skin. The scabs from all the gashes came off only to reveal black, discolored patches, and my whole body is covered in unsightly pits, densely concentrated lumps with small white boils that itch like crazy. When I shower or get too hot, that itchy feeling from the boils is worse than salt in an open wound. It itches so much that I can barely take it—sometimes I have to rub the affected areas with pebbles from the riverside, or use a knife to drain the pus before I feel any relief. I’ve been afflicted by this pain night and day for over 15 years. During this time, I’ve gone to see several traditional Chinese medicine doctors in private clinics, spending 10,500 yuan in medical bills without any improvement whatsoever. Enduring incredible physical torment and being unable to contact my brothers and sisters and live a normal church life, I experienced great depths of agony and would often pray to God with tears in my eyes, asking that He stay by my side and give me faith and strength. If I didn’t have God’s protection and guidance during those dark days, I never would have made it through.

It’s been 15 years since I was arrested, and as I reflect, I realize that though I have indeed suffered to a degree, I’ve also come to see the great red dragon for what it really is and truly recognize its demonic substance. I now read God’s words which say: **“Thousands of years of hate are concentrated in the heart, millennia of sinfulness are inscribed upon the heart—how could this not inspire loathing? Avenge God, completely snuff out His enemy, do not allow it to run rampant any longer, and do not permit it to rule as a tyrant! Now is the time: Man has long since gathered all his strength, he has devoted all his efforts**

**and paid every price for this, to tear off the hideous face of this devil and allow people, who have been blinded, and who have endured every manner of suffering and hardship, to rise up from their pain and rebel against this evil old devil”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Work and Entry (8)). Pondering God’s words, I’ve seen even more clearly how cruel and savage the CCP is. They claim to respect religious freedom, but in secret they wantonly arrest and persecute Christians, seeking to thoroughly suppress God’s work of the salvation of mankind and turn China into an atheist country. They are a demonic cabal that despises the truth and resists God. I have truly seen the ugly face of the CCP and have come to despise and rebel against them entirely. Through this experience, I’ve also come to recognize how God is always looking after and protecting me. Each time I was in pain or felt weak, God’s words would instruct and guide me and give me strength and faith. I experienced God’s authentic love for humankind and His wondrousness and omnipotence. This deeply fortified my faith in God. No matter how rocky the road ahead might be or how much my body must suffer, I will follow God until the very end!

## 77. Blind Love Is a Terrible Thing

By Xiao Li, China

In 1998, my three sisters and I all accepted Almighty God's last days' work. We would often fellowship God's words, sing hymns and praise God together, and would also encourage each other to seek the truth earnestly and seek salvation. Later we all began doing duties in the church, and whenever we ran into each other we would chat about our current situations and what we'd learned in our duties. But my youngest sister, Xiao Zhi, when not complaining about difficulties in her duty, would mostly talk about problems concerning other people. One time, Xiao Zhi said that she had encountered a lot of issues starting out as a watering team leader, but the church's leader didn't give her any help. She also complained that the brothers and sisters didn't have a grasp of the principles in their duties, that the leader failed to fellowship on and resolve this issue, and that the leader wasn't capable of doing real work. However, I was acquainted with her church's leader and he was actually able to do real work. Seeing how my sister wasn't trying to learn from her experience and was instead just picking at her leader's faults, I thought that she was just short on experience and had not yet come to know herself, so I often helped her and fellowshipped God's words with her. I told her that she should stop focusing on other people, start focusing on her own life entry and try to learn from any difficulties she encountered. As time went by we didn't get to see each other so much, because we were both quite busy.

One day in August of 2018, I happened to see a letter that a leader had written to Sister Xiang Yuxun, asking her to provide more details for a file on an evil person who was to be expelled. To my surprise, the evil person was my youngest sister, Xiao Zhi. At the time, I couldn't believe my eyes.

Never in my wildest imaginings had I thought my sister would be expelled. I took a closer look at Yuxun's write-up and saw that in Xiao Zhi's time as a watering work supervisor, she had often used her position to scold and belittle others. When a sister brought up her inadequacies, Xiao Zhi failed to accept the criticism and even ridiculed and attacked that sister. Eventually, that sister felt so constrained and unhappy that she didn't want to do her duty anymore. Other brothers and sisters also felt constrained by Xiao Zhi, to varying degrees, and were themselves dispirited. When I saw this information, I couldn't believe Xiao Zhi would commit such evils and I even developed certain ideas about Yuxun, thinking: "Do you have some kind of bias against my sister? She might not have great life entry, but she's no evil person. Could you be overstating the case?" The more I thought about it, the more upset I became. That night I couldn't get to sleep. I thought about how my sister had left her family and her job, and how hard it had been for her traveling all those years to spread the gospel and do her duty. I remembered how one time an evil person reported her while she was spreading the gospel, and she was forced to hide for a night in a run-down house to avoid arrest. In her years of gospel sharing, she had been hit and had abuse yelled at her by religious people, slept out in haystacks and pig sties, and often went without meals. She might not have had much to show for her many years as a believer, but she had put in a lot of hard work. How could she now be expelled as an evil person? However, I then reflected that the church acts in accordance with principle, and that expulsion is always based on a person's pattern of behavior and their nature essence. The church never wrongly accuses people. Was Xiao Zhi actually an evil person? The very thought of it grieved me. If she were really expelled, she wouldn't be saved and all the hardship she had endured would have been in vain. I felt

awful whenever I thought about this in the days that followed, as if a stone was weighing down on my chest.

Just a few days later, I received a letter from another of my sisters, Xiao Yue, saying that our youngest sister was very unwell and needed an operation. On reading the letter I thought: "If Xiao Zhi can use this bout of illness to self-reflect and repent to God, maybe she can avoid being expelled?" I immediately wrote to Xiao Zhi, using God's words to tell her of God's righteous disposition. I said she needed to use her illness as an opportunity for self-reflection and repentance, rather than looking for external causes. But the issue with Xiao Zhi wasn't as simple as I thought. When I visited home two months later, Xiao Yue told me about our little sister's behavior. Xiao Zhi's disposition was particularly arrogant; after taking over the watering work, she had insisted that everything be done her way. When a sister she was paired with disagreed with her about work and wouldn't go along with her views, she had become resentful and turned to attacking and excluding that sister. She had even tried to turn others against the sister, spreading bias against her amongst the others so that they were misled and judged the sister together with her. Later on, when that sister was not in a good state, Xiao Zhi not only failed to help her but also drove a wedge between her and the others, saying that the sister couldn't perform her duty for being in a bad state and stopping the others from helping her. This led the sister to become even more negative, until she couldn't do her duty anymore and was dismissed. When another sister said she felt constrained by Xiao Zhi, Xiao Zhi was deeply resentful and took every opportunity to get back at that sister and attack her. She would also judge and disparage the sister in front of other brothers and sisters. When the sister became distressed and negative as a result, Xiao Zhi seized the opportunity to tell the leader and the others that the sister had lost the work

of the Holy Spirit and wasn't cut out for her duty, and said that she wanted her dismissed. Brothers and sisters were being negatively affected by Xiao Zhi's constant attack and punishment, and the way that she excluded and disparaged them, and as a result they were failing to make headway in their work. The watering work of the church was being seriously disrupted. Her leader pointed out her issues and tried to help her several times, but as well as failing to accept his criticism she continually argued back. Right up until she was dismissed she showed no self-knowledge and remained defiant. She even picked at the flaws of the leader and criticized him behind his back. When Xiao Yue tried to point out her issues, she complained that Xiao Yue didn't understand her and didn't speak up for her. She even claimed: "One can't speak honestly in the church. I was dismissed simply for speaking openly about what I thought." I was shocked when I heard this. I didn't realize that my youngest sister was so preoccupied with status, had such a vicious nature, and was capable of attacking and punishing those who disagreed with her. This was no ordinary corruption, it was a problem in her very nature! Later on, when I met up with her, I urgently fellowshipped with her and advised her to reflect on her wicked deeds. If she didn't repent, I said, she would be expelled and would lose her chance at salvation. To my surprise, far from accepting my advice, she indignantly replied: "You don't know what's gone on and I don't wish to say any more about it. If I say anything else you'll all just say I'm trying to argue my way out." I was shocked to see her so aggrieved. I had no idea she was so stubborn and didn't accept the truth at all. Was she beyond redemption? At this, my spirits sank. I remembered how, when we got together, she'd always be criticizing other people, passing judgment and never reflecting on herself. She'd also always be picking at the leader's faults. I thought of God's words that say: **"Those who give vent to their poisonous, malicious**



**talk within the church, who spread rumors, foment disharmony, and form cliques among the brothers and sisters—they should have been expelled from the church. Yet because now is a different era of God’s work, these people are restricted, for they are decidedly to be eliminated. All who have been corrupted by Satan have corrupt dispositions. Some have nothing more than corrupt dispositions, while others are different: Not only do they have corrupt satanic dispositions, but their nature is also extremely malicious. Not only do their words and actions reveal their corrupt, satanic dispositions; these people are, moreover, the genuine devils and Satans. Their behavior disrupts and disturbs God’s work, it disturbs the brothers’ and sisters’ life entry, and it damages the normal life of the church. Sooner or later, these wolves in sheep’s clothing must be cleansed away; an unsparing attitude, an attitude of rejection, should be adopted toward these lackeys of Satan. Only this is standing on the side of God, and those who fail to do so are wallowing in the mire with Satan”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The

Appearance and Work of God. A Warning to Those Who Do Not Practice the Truth). Through God’s words, I learned that my youngest sister’s behavior was not just the passing exposure of a corrupt disposition, but rather a reflection of her deeply vicious nature. She punished, harassed and retaliated against others and would exclude and attack anyone who disagreed with her or impinged on her interests. She twisted facts to judge and condemn others until they were reduced to a state of negativity. The leader and others pruned and assisted her regarding her behavior on several occasions, but she never admitted to being at fault, was always resistant and argued back. There was no remorse or self-reflection, and she even hated and attacked the leader. Xiao Yue and I fellowshiped with and assisted her several times, but she didn’t accept what we said and became resentful and resistant toward us,

thinking we were giving her a hard time. After being dismissed, she failed to reflect on herself and twisted the facts, saying that you couldn't speak honestly in the church and that she was only dismissed because she spoke her mind. Wasn't that inverting the truth and misleading others? Wasn't she denying God's righteousness, and denying that the truth reigns in God's house? In the past I'd always thought that she was short on life entry, and that her evil behaviors were simply the passing exposure of corruption, so I kept on aiding and supporting her. But now I realized that this wasn't a matter of inadequate life entry or the passing exposure of corruption. She was averse to and hated the truth, and her essence was that of an evil person.

In the past, I thought that since my youngest sister had made sacrifices, expended herself, suffered greatly in her duty and put in hard work, albeit without achieving anything significant, God would take note even if she didn't pursue the truth. Later on, however, through reading God's words, I realized that this understanding was distorted. God's words say: **"I decide the destination of each person not on the basis of age, seniority, amount of suffering, and least of all, the degree to which they invite pity, but according to whether they possess the truth. There is no other choice but this. You must realize that all those who do not follow the will of God shall also be punished. This is an immutable fact. Therefore, all those who are punished are so punished for the righteousness of God and as retribution for their numerous evil acts"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Prepare Sufficient Good Deeds for Your Destination). God's words taught me that God doesn't decide each person's destination based on seniority, or on how much they've suffered, or sacrificed and expended, but rather on whether they've achieved dispositional transformation and attained the truth. All that accept the truth, practice the truth and ultimately

achieve dispositional transformation can attain salvation. As for those evil people, disbelievers and antichrists who are averse to and hate the truth, no matter how much they suffer, they will ultimately be eliminated and fail to attain salvation because they commit all manner of evil and don't achieve the slightest transformation. I thought of how my youngest sister had followed the faith for a number of years, and yet, despite outwardly making sacrifices, expending herself and suffering for her duty, she didn't seek the truth in any way, didn't come to know herself and didn't feel any remorse or repentance about bringing so much disruption to the work of the church. That it had come to this, to expulsion, was something she only had herself to blame for. It was the righteousness of God. I had always believed that her ability to make sacrifices, expend herself and suffer in her duty meant that she was a true believer, but only now I realized that she did it all for renown and status, rather than to pursue the truth and achieve dispositional transformation. No matter how long she'd kept the faith or suffered, she hadn't accepted the truth at all, hadn't truly repented and transformed, and would inevitably be eliminated in the end. I thought of how Paul outwardly made sacrifices, expended himself and worked hard in his duty, having traveled across half of Europe spreading the gospel, and how because he didn't attend to dispositional transformation and didn't seek to do his duty as a created being—expending himself instead in pursuit of a crown and the blessings of the heavenly kingdom—he remained capable of saying the following: “I have fought a good fight, I have finished my course, I have kept the faith: From now on there is laid up for me a crown of righteousness” (2 Timothy 4:7–8). Paul unabashedly demanded a crown from God and there was no sincerity or submission to God to be found in the sacrifices he made—it was all transactional, driven by ambition and desire. He walked the path of resistance to God, ultimately offending God's

disposition and falling into eternal punishment. I realized that nothing comes of faith if one doesn't seek and accept the truth and focuses instead on outward sacrifice and suffering. It may even end in punishment, because one is liable to commit all kinds of evils in this way.

Later on, I found a passage of God's words that gave me a path of practice. God's words say: **"Who is Satan, who are demons, and who are God's enemies if not resisters who do not believe in God? Are they not those people who are rebellious against God? Are they not those who claim to have faith, yet who lack truth? Are they not those who merely seek to obtain blessings while being unable to bear witness for God? You still mingle with those demons today and treat them with conscience and love, but in this case are you not extending good intentions toward Satan? Are you not in league with demons? If people have made it to this point and are still unable to distinguish between good and evil, and continue to blindly be loving and merciful without any desire to seek God's intentions or being able in any way to take God's intentions as their own, then their endings will be all the more wretched. Anyone who does not believe in the God in the flesh is an enemy of God. If you can bear conscience and love toward an enemy, do you not lack a sense of justice? If you are compatible with those which I detest and with which I disagree, and still bear love or personal feelings toward them, then are you not rebellious? Are you not intentionally resisting God? Does such a person possess truth? If people bear conscience toward enemies, love for demons, and mercy for Satan, then are they not intentionally disrupting God's work?"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. God and Man Will Enter Into Rest Together). I felt deeply guilty after reading God's words. God asks that we love what He loves and hate what He hates. Those that do not accept and even despise the truth are

evil people; they are of the devil Satan's ilk and should be the subject of our abomination. My youngest sister did all kinds of evil, failed to repent and was exposed as an evil person, but I didn't discern her true substance according to God's words and continually claimed that she was being wronged because she had suffered greatly in her duty, made many sacrifices and had worked hard despite having little to show for it. Wasn't I just playing nice with Satan and standing on its side in resistance to God? I had been a believer for many years, eaten and drunk many of God's words, but I was unable to consider people and situations in light of His words. Instead, I let my affection dictate my words, was unable to separate good from evil and didn't have the slightest grasp of principle. I was muddled and confused, and God despised and abhorred me. Having realized that, I was able to let go of some of my affection for my youngest sister and view her expulsion with the proper attitude.

One day, three months later, when I happened to overhear the sister I was partnered with say that all of the information needed for my youngest sister's expulsion had been put in order, I felt a pang of sadness. "Now any hope of salvation for her is lost," I thought. The more I thought about it, the more I pitied my youngest sister. I even held out hope that maybe the information gathered for expulsion would be insufficient and she could continue laboring in the church. But then I realized that I had the wrong attitude. I clearly knew that my youngest sister was an evil person in essence and wouldn't be a recipient of God's salvation, but I still empathized with and pitied her, hoping to keep her in the church. Wasn't I having sympathy with a devil and standing in opposition to God? So, I hurriedly prayed to God, asking Him to guide me in overcoming the constraints of my affection. After prayer, I thought of the following passages of God's words: **"Mankind all live in a state of feelings—and so**

**God does not avoid a single one of them, and exposes the secrets hidden in the hearts of all mankind. Why is it so hard for people to separate themselves from their feelings? Does doing so surpass the standards of conscience? Can conscience fulfill God's will? Can feelings help people through adversity? In God's eyes, feelings are His enemy—has this not been clearly stated in God's words?"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Interpretations of the Mysteries of "God's Words to the Entire Universe," Chapter 28). **"I do not give people the opportunity to express their feelings, for I am without fleshly feelings, and have grown to detest the feelings of people to an extreme degree. It is because of the feelings between people that I have been cast to one side, and thus I have become an 'other' in their eyes; it is because of the feelings between people that I have been forgotten; it is because of the feelings of man that he seizes the opportunity to pick up his 'conscience'; it is because of the feelings of man that he is always averse to My chastisement; it is because of the feelings of man that he calls Me unfair and unjust, and says that I am heedless of man's feelings in My handling of things. Do I also have kin upon earth?"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. God's Words to the Entire Universe, Chapter 28). Through the exposition of God's words, I learned that our affections are the biggest impediment to practicing the truth. We are incapable of considering people and situations in light of the truth principles when we live by our affections. When I learned that my youngest sister was going to be expelled from the church, I sympathized with and pitied her, even hoping that her case wouldn't meet the criteria for expulsion and that she could remain in the church. It was all due to my excessive affection for her. Because I lived by satanic poisons like "Man is not inanimate; how can he be free from emotions?" and "Blood is thicker than water," I became incapable of discerning good from evil and knowing what should be loved

and what should be despised. When Yuxun submitted information about my youngest sister, I defended my sister against what I thought to be an injustice without first understanding the facts of the situation. I thought that Yuxun had overstated the case in her report, and I griped about her not helping my sister. In fact, the brothers and sisters had fellowshiped with her and helped her out a number of times, but she had not accepted their help and went on to criticize them behind their backs. I truly was distorting the situation and speaking on behalf of Satan. Even though my sister had committed so many evils, I didn't hate her and even wished for her to stay on in the church; I had allowed my affection to get the better of me. Every day that an evil person like her was allowed to remain in the church would be another day where evil was committed, bringing yet more harm to the brothers and sisters and the work of the church. Wasn't I indulging Xiao Zhi's evildoing by wanting her to remain in the church and allowing her to continue disrupting the church's work? I had played a part in an evil person's misdeeds! It was then that I finally got a sense of what was meant, in the words of God, by the statement: **"Feelings are His enemy."** I realized that if I didn't seek the truth and let my affection dictate how I acted when confronted with issues, I was liable to do evil and resist God at any time.

Later on, I saw a passage of God's words that says: **"Love what God loves, and hate what God hates: This is the principle that should be adhered to. God loves those who pursue the truth and are able to follow His will; these are also the people that we should love. Those who are not able to follow God's will, who hate and rebel against God—these people are detested by God, and we should detest them, too. This is what God asks of man. If your parents do not believe in God, if they know full well that faith in God is the right path, and that it can lead to**

salvation, yet remain unreceptive, then there is no doubt that they are people who are averse to and hate the truth, and that they are people who resist and hate God—and God naturally abhors and hates them. Could you abhor such parents? They oppose and revile God—in which case they are surely demons and Satans. Could you hate and curse them? These are all real questions. If your parents prevent you from believing in God, how should you treat them? As is asked by God, you should love what God loves, and hate what God hates. During the Age of Grace, the Lord Jesus said, ‘Who is My mother? And who are My brothers?’ ‘For whoever shall follow the will of My Father which is in heaven, the same is My brother, and sister, and mother.’ These words already existed back in the Age of Grace, and now God’s words are even more clear: ‘Love what God loves, and hate what God hates.’ These words cut straight to the point, yet people are often unable to **grasp their true meaning**” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Only by Recognizing One’s Own Misguided Views Can One Truly Transform). Through God’s words, I got a sense of His righteousness. God treats people according to principle and asks that we do the same. Those who seek the truth, sincerely believe in God and loyally perform their duties, are to be loved by us, just as those who consistently disrupt the church, punishing and attacking brothers and sisters while hating the truth and hating God, are all evil people to be spurned and despised by us. Even if they are our own relatives, we must view them in light of God’s words, loving what God loves and hating what God hates. But I was without truth. I viewed everything from the perspective of my affection. I lacked principle and discernment, showing love and sympathy toward an evil person, a demon that had clearly been exposed. This was blind love! When I realized this, I praised God’s righteousness and saw for myself that the truth and righteousness reign in



God's house such that no evil person can gain a footing within it. Now, with the aid of God's words, I was able to free myself from the fetters of affection and gain some understanding of myself. Thanks be to God!

## 78. How Being Cunning Harmed Me

By Samantha, Japan

Once when we were summing up our work, a church leader pointed out that our gospel work hadn't gone very well recently, and asked me to explain it. It was only then that I realized our productivity had declined. After the meeting, I rushed to look into the matter, and found that our productivity had dropped by half compared to the previous month. This made me quite anxious: "If we go on like this, doing so poorly, will I be dismissed? That won't do—I have to get to the bottom of the matter, and raise our productivity again." So I spoke to the brothers and sisters one by one, asking them about any problems or difficulties in their duty. In gatherings, I fellowshipped specifically on these issues and had those who were doing well share their experiences. Over the next few days, we started doing quite a bit better and I could finally put my heart at ease: "If things go on like this, we'll do a little better than last month. If I keep this up, don't do any evil or anything disruptive, I'll be able to stay in the church and won't be eliminated." After that, my tension started to ease. Approaching the end of the month, I noticed the results of our work were the same as the month before. I thought: "If we do well this month, we'll have to do even better next month for it to look like I'm making progress. That means expending even more effort. Do I really need the pressure? We've done alright this month anyway—I won't be dismissed or eliminated." When I thought about it that way, I completely relaxed. In performing my duty, I just went through the motions, becoming complacent, and I stopped following up on our work so closely. When the brothers and sisters mentioned their struggles, I didn't fellowship to resolve them. Sometimes when I found some of them violating the principles in their duty, I did

nothing about it. I just thought these were individual problems, and it was fine as long as it didn't impact our overall effectiveness. Sometimes I noticed that my brothers and sisters were getting lazy in their duty and lacked a sense of urgency. I knew this was a problem that should be addressed, but as soon as I remembered we were getting decent results, I figured being lax was normal and turned a blind eye. When I was living in that state, I felt a real spiritual darkness. I wasn't gaining any enlightenment or illumination from God's words. Nor was I uncovering any problems in my work—I'd even get sleepy and nod off when we were summarizing the work. Only when I saw our productivity kept declining did I start to panic—then I'd rush to check in with the brothers and sisters to find where we were going wrong.

Then I listened to a sister speak at a gathering: "When some people realize they haven't been doing well in their duty, they get afraid of being reassigned or dismissed. That's when they start to make an effort. But once they get some results, they become greedy for comfort and put down their burden. This is a cunning way to do one's duty—it's deceitful behavior." This stirred up some feelings for me. I couldn't help but self-reflect: When our productivity declined, I mustered up my energy for fear of being reassigned or dismissed. I wanted to get better results. When I got better results or they stayed the same, I coveted comfort and in my duty I would go through the motions and drag my heels. I thought it was good enough to get consistent results every month and not get dismissed. Wasn't that being cunning and slippery? I realized that every time I encountered this kind of situation, what I exposed and how I behaved was the same. At that point I felt a little afraid.

During my devotionals, I read God's words: **"There are not many opportunities currently to perform a duty, so you must take hold of**

**them when you can. It is precisely when faced with a duty that you must exert yourself; that is when you must offer yourself up, expend yourself for God, and when you are required to pay the price. Do not hold anything back, harbor any schemes, leave any leeway, or give yourself a way out. If you leave any leeway, are calculating, or are wily and treacherous, then you are bound to do a poor job. Suppose you say, ‘No one saw me acting in a slick way. How cool!’ What kind of thinking is this? Do you think you have pulled the wool over people’s eyes, and over God’s, too? In actual fact, though, does God know what you have done or not? He knows. In fact, anyone who interacts with you for a while will learn of your corruption and vileness, and though they may not say so outright, they will have their assessments of you in their hearts. There have been many people who were revealed and eliminated because so many others came to understand them. Once everyone saw through to their essence, they exposed those people for who they were and kicked them out. So, whether they pursue the truth or not, people should do their duty well to the best of their ability; they should employ their conscience in doing practical things. You may have defects, but if you can be effective in performing your duty, you will not be eliminated. If you are always thinking that you are fine, that you are sure not to be eliminated, if you still do not reflect or try to know yourself, and you ignore your proper tasks, if you are always perfunctory, then when God’s chosen people really do lose their tolerance with you, they will expose you for who you are, and in all likelihood, you will be eliminated. That’s because everyone has seen through you and you have lost your dignity and integrity. If no one trusts you, could God trust you? God scrutinizes man’s innermost heart: He absolutely could not trust such a person” (The Word, Vol. 3. The**

Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Life Entry Begins With the Performance of Duty). God's words say that the attitude people should have in their duty is to put their heart into it and pay a price, to give it their all. If they can get good results by paying a little more price but they're holding back, content to achieve just a little in their duty, then they are playing games with God, and being cunning. I could see my own behavior in my duty—I was content to achieve a little just to make sure I wasn't reassigned or dismissed. I didn't find ways to resolve brothers' and sisters' problems and difficulties. When summing up our work I just went through the motions, and when I saw some of them going against the principles in their duty or being lazy, I thought it was fine as long as it didn't impact our overall achievements. I turned a blind eye to it. Clearly, putting my heart into the work and paying a bit more of a price could improve our results, but I didn't want to get tired or stressed out, so I engaged in trickery. In my duty, I was harboring petty cleverness, scheming, and cheating God. That was really deceitful! When commissioning others, everyone wants to find someone who's honest and reliable—the kind of person who's dependable and puts people's minds at ease. But if you commission someone who harbors petty cleverness and plays games, not only will they not get the task done, but they might even ruin it. That kind of person doesn't have a conscience or reason, nor even the basic standards of conduct. They're not remotely worthy of confidence or being entrusted with anything. I saw I was just like that. I took on a duty but didn't give it my all. I played games with God and was sly. It looked like I was getting some results in my duty, and other people didn't notice any problems, but God sees all. If I kept on being perfunctory for long, I'd eventually be revealed and eliminated by God. I thought of God's words: **“The Lord Jesus once said, ‘For whoever has, to him shall be given, and he shall have more abundance: but whoever has not, from him**

**shall be taken away even that he has'** (Matthew 13:12). **What is the meaning of these words? What they mean is that if you don't even carry out or dedicate yourself to your own duty or job, God shall take away what was once yours. What does it mean to 'take away'? How does that make people feel? It could be that you fail to attain that which your caliber and gifts could have allowed you to, and you feel nothing, and are just like a nonbeliever. That is what it is to have everything taken away by God. If, in your duty, you are remiss, and do not pay a price, and you are not sincere, God shall take away what was once yours, He shall take back your right to perform your duty, He shall not give you this right"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Only an Honest Person Can Live Out True Human Likeness). God is righteous. I was being sly and perfunctory in my duty, not doing what I should have nor what I was able to, so I could no longer spot obvious problems, I was always getting sleepy in my duty, and my productivity declined. This was God revealing His disposition to me. I came before God in prayer, ready to repent to Him, asking Him to guide me to know myself better.

Then, at a gathering, I read a passage of God's words that really impacted me. God's words say: **"God loves honest people, but hates deceitful and slippery people. If you are a treacherous person and attempt to play tricks, will God not loathe you? Will God's house simply let you off the hook? Sooner or later, you will be held accountable. God likes honest people and dislikes treacherous people. Everyone should understand this clearly, and stop being confused and doing foolish things. Momentary ignorance is excusable, but refusing to accept the truth at all is just obstinacy. Honest people can take responsibility. They do not consider their own gains and losses, they just safeguard the work and interests of God's house. They have kind**

**and honest hearts that are like bowls of clear water that one can see the bottom of at a glance. There is also transparency in their actions. A deceitful person always plays tricks, always disguises things, covers up, and wraps themselves up so tightly that no one can see through them. People can't see through to their inner thoughts, but God can scrutinize the deepest things in their heart. If God sees that they are not an honest person, and that they are slippery—never accepting the truth, always engaging in deceit against God, and never handing their heart over to Him—then God will not like them, He will loathe and abandon them. Those who prosper among the nonbelievers, who are silver-tongued and quick-witted, what kind of people are they? Is this clear to you? What is their essence? It can be said that they are all extraordinarily shrewd, they are all extremely deceitful and treacherous, they are the genuine devils and Satans. Could God save someone such as this? God loathes nothing more than devils—people who are deceitful and treacherous. God definitely will not save such people, so you absolutely must not be this kind of person. ... What is God's attitude toward people who are deceitful and treacherous? He spurns them, He sets them aside and pays them no heed, He regards them as of the same class as animals. In God's eyes, such people are merely wearing human skin; in their essence, they are of the same kind as the devils and Satan, they are walking corpses, and God will never save them. What is the state of these people now? There is darkness in their hearts, they lack true faith, and no matter what happens to them, they are never enlightened or illuminated. When faced with disaster and tribulations, they pray to God, but God is absent, and they have no one they can truly depend on in their hearts. In order to receive blessings, they try to put on a good show, but they can't help**

**themselves, for they are without conscience or reason; they couldn't be good people even if they wanted to, they couldn't control themselves even if they wanted to stop doing bad things, they have to do these things. Might they be capable of knowing themselves after they are sent away and eliminated? Although they will know that they deserved this punishment, they will not say it, and even though they appear capable of doing a duty, they will still play tricks, and their work will not get clear results. So what do you say: Are these people able to truly repent? Absolutely not. This is because they do not possess conscience or reason and they do not love the truth. God does not save such treacherous and evil people. What hope is there in believing in God for such people? Their belief is already bereft of significance, and they are destined to gain nothing from it. If, throughout their faith in God, people do not pursue the truth, then it doesn't matter how many years they have been a believer; in the end, they will gain nothing"** (The Word, Vol. 5. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers (8)).

Reading those words—"slippery," "deceitful," "extraordinarily shrewd," "God will never save them," and "they are destined to gain nothing"—pricked my heart. I felt like God was exposing and condemning me. I'd always thought that you shouldn't be too candid, that you had to be calculating and have tricks up your sleeve. I lived by the satanic philosophy that you have to take advantage, not be taken advantage of, weighed whether I'd stand to benefit before doing anything, and expected to get the greatest return for the smallest effort. I believed that was what made a person clever. I kept carrying out that philosophy for living after gaining my faith. I thought I couldn't be too honest in my duty or put all my energy into it, that would be foolish. If it ended up that I wasn't blessed, wouldn't that be a tremendous loss? I couldn't withstand losing. Better to expend just a



little but get great blessings—that's the smart way! So I put effort into my duty only when I judged it necessary, and was always gauging if effort was needed. I was very calculating. When productivity was high I enjoyed a couple days of rest. Even when I saw there were problems in the work, if it didn't impact our effectiveness and I wouldn't be dismissed and eliminated, I didn't have any sense of urgency, and I'd just float through the days. If we were doing poorly and I'd bear the consequences, I'd work hard, find the reasons for it, and resolve the problems. Once we got some results my anxiety would settle and I'd start to revel in my comforts and get some more rest. I was so cunning and deceitful! How was that doing a duty or being devoted to God? I thought I was quick-witted, but God sees all. God absolutely won't save people who are always cunning in their duty. God likes honest people—honest people open their hearts to God. They are wholehearted in their duties. They fulfill their responsibilities and give everything they have, and don't leave themselves a way out or consider whether they'll be blessed. God will bless that kind of person. I had been the person in charge of the gospel work, and by being cunning, perfunctory, and not caring about progress, I had prevented the others from having their negative states and problems resolved in time, and had caused our work productivity to decline. It not only hurt the brothers and sisters, but also hindered the gospel work of the church. I felt so much regret and self-reproach when I thought about that. I prayed to God that I was ready to repent, and swore before Him that I'd put all my energy into my duty from then on, and stop being crafty and perfunctory.

Then I read a passage of God's words in my devotionals that helped me understand the meaning of doing a duty. God's words say: **“Regardless of what duty one performs, it is the most proper thing they could do, the most beautiful and just thing among humankind. As created beings,**

people ought to perform their duty, and only then can they receive the approval of the Creator. Created beings live under the Creator's dominion, and they accept all that is provided by God and everything that comes from God, so they should fulfill their responsibilities and obligations. This is perfectly natural and justified, and was ordained by God. From this it can be seen that, for people to perform the duty of a created being is more just, beautiful, and noble than anything else done while living on earth; nothing among humankind is more meaningful or worthy, and nothing brings greater meaning and worth to the life of a created person, than performing the duty of a created being. On earth, only the group of people who truly and sincerely perform the duty of a created being are those who submit to the Creator. This group does not follow worldly trends; they submit to the leadership and guidance of God, only listen to the words of the Creator, accept the truths expressed by the Creator, and live by the words of the Creator. This is the truest, most resounding testimony, and it is the best testimony of belief in God. For a created being to be able to fulfill the duty of a created being, to be able to satisfy the Creator, is the most beautiful thing among humankind, and is something that should be spread as a tale to be praised by all people. Anything the Creator entrusts to created beings should be unconditionally accepted by them; for humankind, this is a matter of both happiness and privilege, and for all those who fulfill the duty of a created being, nothing is more beautiful or worthy of commemoration—it is something positive. ... Such a beautiful and such a great thing is twisted by the ilk of the antichrists into a transaction, in which they solicit crowns and rewards from God's hand. Such a transaction turns something most beautiful and just into something most ugly and wicked. Is this not what the

**antichrists do? Judging from this, are the antichrists not wicked? They are quite wicked indeed! This is a manifestation of their wickedness”**

(The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Nine (Part Seven)). Reading God’s revealing words had a big impact on me. God quietly gives His all to save corrupt mankind, nurturing us with what we need and giving us a chance to do a duty so that in the course of that, we can pursue the truth and resolve our corrupt dispositions, submit to God, be devoted to Him, and gain His salvation. Doing a duty in the church is our responsibility, our obligation, and it’s God giving us a chance to gain the truth and be saved. This is the most wonderful, most just task a person can take on. But antichrists take this beautiful, just thing and twist it into a business, into something transactional. They hold on to the hope of being blessed in their faith and their duty. They can’t possibly have sincerity, or suffer and pay a price. They’re textbook disbelievers and opportunists. Looking at how I acted in my duty, wasn’t I just like them? I wasn’t considering God’s intentions in my duty, and I always held something back. I wanted to get a lot in return for giving very little. Wasn’t I turning my duty into something transactional? I always used to think that as long as I had results in my duty, could stay in the church, and wasn’t dismissed or eliminated, I could be saved. But I finally saw those were my own notions and imaginings that weren’t in line with God’s words. God never said that accomplishing a bit in your duty, not doing evil, and not being dismissed or eliminated, meant you’d be saved. God determines whether people can be saved based on whether they pursue the truth, whether they enter into the truth reality in their duty, and if they resolve their corrupt dispositions. There are no other shortcuts. God wants people to be genuine. If people are always cunning and perfunctory in their duty, even though they may achieve some things, God detests them. They’ll end up revealed and eliminated by God. I thought

of something the Lord Jesus said: **“Because you are lukewarm, and neither cold nor hot, I will spew you out of My mouth”** (Revelation 3:16). I wasn’t thinking about progress in my duty, and was simply going through the motions. Wasn’t that attitude of being neither hot nor cold just being lukewarm? Wouldn’t God spit me out of His mouth? Knowing that God’s disposition tolerates no offense was frightening. I said a prayer, “God, I want to repent. From now on I’ll put everything into my work. Please discipline me if I muddle through.”

I read another passage of God’s words later on that gave me a path of practice. Almighty God says: **“When people perform their duty, they are, in fact, doing what they ought to do. If you do it before God, if you perform your duty and submit to God with an attitude of honesty and with heart, will this attitude not be far more correct? So how should you apply this attitude to your everyday life? You must make ‘worshiping God with heart and honesty’ your reality. Whenever you want to be slack and just go through the motions, whenever you want to act in a slippery way and be lazy, and whenever you get distracted or would rather be enjoying yourself, you should consider: ‘In behaving like this, am I being untrustworthy? Is this putting my heart into doing my duty? Am I being disloyal by doing this? In doing this, am I failing to live up to the commission God has entrusted to me?’ This is how you should self-reflect. If you come to find out that you are always perfunctory in your duty, that you are disloyal, and that you have hurt God, what should you do? You should say, ‘In the moment I sensed that there was something wrong here, but I didn’t treat it as a problem; I just glossed over it carelessly. I didn’t realize until now that I really had been perfunctory, that I had not lived up to my responsibility. I truly am lacking in conscience and reason!’ You have found the problem and**

**come to know a bit about yourself—so now, you must turn yourself around! Your attitude toward performing your duty was wrong. You were careless with it, as with an extra job, and you did not put your heart into it. If you are perfunctory like this again, you must pray to God and let Him discipline and chasten you. You must have such a will in performing your duty. Only then can you truly repent. You may turn yourself around only when your conscience is clear and your attitude toward performing your duty is transformed. And as you repent, you must also reflect often on whether or not you really have put all your heart, all your mind, and all your strength into performing your duty; then, using God’s words as the measure and applying them to yourself, you will learn what problems still lie in the performance of your duty. By constantly resolving problems in this way, according to God’s word, are you not bringing the performance of your duty with all your heart, mind, and strength into reality? To perform your duty in such a way: have you not already done so with all your heart, mind, and strength?”**

(The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Only in the Frequent Reading of God’s Words and Contemplation of the Truth Is There a Way Ahead). God’s words gave me a clear path of practice. I need to use my heart and be honest in my duty, be willing to pay a price, be attentive and responsible, and put in all of my energy so I can do my duty well and satisfy God. Also, when I want to be perfunctory and lazy, I should pray, rebel against the flesh, and ask for God’s discipline and chastening. That way, I won’t be likely to follow the flesh.

I followed God’s words after that. I considered how to do my duty well and be more productive. I knew that all the brothers and sisters on the team had their strengths and weaknesses, so I thought about how to arrange everyone’s work to allow their strengths to flourish, and gave them real

guidance and help in the areas they were lacking. Also, before, I had felt like I was a supervisor—as long as I had a good handle on the work and the others did well in their duties, that meant I was doing well and could enjoy a bit of leisure time. Now I set a goal for myself to do my duty to the best of my ability. My schedule became incredibly full every day, busier than before, and sometimes I got really tired, but I felt really at ease, at peace. And to my surprise, the next month our productivity increased noticeably. I was thrilled. I could see that God wants us to be genuine. When I changed my perspective and genuinely did my duty, I could see His guidance and get results in my duty. Thank God!

## **79. Understanding What It Means to Be a Good Person**

By Vanessa, Myanmar

Since I was little, my parents taught me to be reasonable, kind to others, understanding of others' difficulties, and not to split hairs over every little thing. They said that this was what made someone a good person, and that it would earn others' respect and esteem. I also thought that was a good way to be, and I often reminded myself to be considerate and kind. I never got into conflict with my family or the other villagers, and I was very concerned with making a favorable impression. My fellow villagers often praised me, saying I had good humanity and was considerate, and I didn't bicker with anyone when they offended me. This kind of praise made me really happy. I thought that as a person, I should be amicable in this way, and I should be understanding even when someone was in the wrong. I felt certain that this was the standard for being a good person. I kept doing things that way after becoming a believer, too.

Then in November 2021, I was elected as a church deacon and started spreading the gospel with a few other brothers and sisters. One of them, Kevin, was from the same village as me. He had some caliber—his fellowship was relatively clear when he shared the gospel, and he was able to use examples to explain things, to help those investigating the true way understand. But I discovered that he was quite arrogant, and didn't like accepting others' suggestions. Also, a lot of the time he didn't follow the principles in his duty. Rather than exalting and bearing witness to God in his gospel work, he talked a lot about how many people he'd converted. He'd also say that the brothers and sisters all liked listening to him preach and really adulated him. Once, someone who was looking into the true way

praised him for having good caliber and preaching well. I'd noticed that Kevin exalted himself and showed off quite a bit, and when sharing the gospel, he didn't focus on bearing witness to God's work of the last days or on resolving people's religious notions. I wanted to mention this to Kevin, but after a bit of thought I decided to wait a little longer. I wanted him to know that I was a kind, reasonable person who didn't call attention to every little problem I saw. I thought I should encourage and help him more. Later, the leader would often send out relevant principles for sharing the gospel to our group and I indirectly fellowshiped a little on things relating to Kevin's behavior. I was hoping that he would come to see his issues through that fellowship. But time passed, and still he didn't turn himself around. I wanted to bring up his problems again, but then I thought that since he was a fairly arrogant person, he might not accept my advice. I was afraid he'd think I was unreasonable and unkind, and would develop a bad impression of me. If we came to an impasse in our relationship and couldn't work well together, my image as a good person would be ruined. At this thought, I just swallowed my words. I felt kind of bad at the time, so I came before God in prayer, asking Him for the strength to practice the truth. After that, Kevin, a few other brothers and sisters and I all went to a village to share the gospel. I noticed that Kevin was still showing off in his fellowship—talking about how he didn't care about money, and how he paid a price for God. He wasn't focused on fellowshiping the truth. On the way home, I mustered up my courage and said to him, "You didn't enter into the principles in your preaching and testifying to God. You need to focus on fellowshiping the truth with potential gospel recipients, on bringing them before God...." Before I could finish, he responded with, "There's nothing wrong with my fellowship. You're overthinking things." I was afraid of wounding his pride if I said anything more, and of damaging our rapport. I



was also worried that he'd think ill of me, so I didn't say anything else. I felt like that was good enough—let him gradually come to see it himself. I found out later that even though we were busy all the time, we weren't getting good results in our gospel work. Some of those in the village who had been investigating had heard Kevin fellowship several times yet still didn't understand. On top of that, they were impacted by rumors, had notions, and didn't want to look into God's work anymore. Then there were others who really looked up to Kevin and only wanted to listen to his fellowship, rather than anyone else's. Seeing this made me really uncomfortable, and I felt quite guilty. These issues had a lot to do with Kevin himself. If I'd brought up his problems earlier, he could have seen them and changed, and our gospel work wouldn't have been set back. But after that, when I really wanted to bring it up, I got worried again that it would damage our rapport, and I felt really conflicted. I figured I could talk to the leader and have her fellowship with him, then our cooperation in our duty wouldn't be impacted, and we could still get along. So, I talked to the leader about what was going on with Kevin. She found some relevant words of God and had us enter into them together, and it seemed Kevin made a bit of a change. So, I just let it go.

Once, I mentioned the matter to another sister who pointed out that I was always protective of my relationships with others, and that was a sign of being a people-pleaser. I thought there was no way I was a people-pleaser—people-pleasers are deceitful. I'd never done anything deceitful, so how could I be one of them? At the time I didn't want to accept her feedback, but I also knew that there was a lesson for me to learn from what she'd said. I prayed to God, asking Him to guide me to know myself. Later, I read God's words: **“People's conduct and ways of dealing with the world must be based on the words of God; this is the most basic**

**principle for human conduct. How can people practice the truth if they do not understand the principles of human conduct? Practicing the truth is not about saying empty words or shouting slogans. Rather it is about how, no matter what people encounter in life, as long as it involves the principles of human conduct, their perspectives on things, or the matter of performing their duties, they are faced with making a choice, and they should seek the truth, search for a basis and principles in God's words, and then find a path of practice. Those who can practice in this way are people who pursue the truth. To be able to pursue the truth in this way no matter how great the difficulties one encounters is to walk the path of Peter, the path of pursuing the truth. For example: What principle should be followed when it comes to interacting with others? Perhaps your original viewpoint is that 'Harmony is a treasure; forbearance is brilliance,' and that you should keep on everyone's good side, avoid causing others to lose face, and offend no one, thereby achieving good relations with others. Constricted by this viewpoint, you keep silent when you witness others doing bad things or violating the principles. You would rather that the work of the church suffers losses than offend anyone. You seek to stay on everyone's good side, no matter who they are. You think only about human sentiments and saving face when you speak, and you always speak nice-sounding words to please others. Even if you discover that someone has problems, you choose to tolerate them, and just talk about them behind their back, but to their face you keep the peace and maintain your relationship. What do you think of such conduct? Is it not that of a people pleaser? Is it not pretty slippery? It violates the principles of human conduct. Is it not lowly to conduct yourself in such a manner? Those who act like this are not good people, this is not a**

**noble way to conduct oneself. No matter how much you have suffered, and no matter how many prices you have paid, if you conduct yourself without principles, then you have failed in this respect, and your conduct will not be recognized, remembered, or accepted before God”**

(The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. To Perform One’s Duty Well, One Must at Least Be Possessed of a Conscience and Reason). I reflected on myself in light of God’s words. I’d felt like I wasn’t a people-pleaser, but how did I really act? During that time, I’d seen that Kevin was showing off a lot in his gospel work. I should have pointed that issue out to help him know himself and do his duty in line with the principles, but I was worried being direct would hurt our relationship. I was always considerate of his feelings and didn’t dare say anything too direct. I even wanted to give him more encouragement, to give him the impression I was a good person and get him to think highly of me. But in fact, I knew that when cooperating with brothers and sisters on a duty, if we notice problems, we need to point them out to one another, make up for each other’s weaknesses, and uphold the church’s work together. I was knowingly doing the wrong thing and not practicing the truth. As a result, Kevin didn’t recognize his own issues. He kept showing off while sharing the gospel, and paid no attention to fellowshiping on the truth. That meant the religious notions of those investigating weren’t resolved and some people, when they were disturbed, stopped attending gatherings. I saw the impact on our work and felt quite guilty, but I was afraid Kevin would become biased against me if I was direct, and that it would damage our relationship. So I deceitfully got a church leader to fellowship with him so that I wouldn’t have to offend him. I saw that I tried to protect relationships with others and ingratiate myself with them in my duty, that I wasn’t upholding the church’s interests at all and didn’t have a sense of justice, and that I wasn’t remotely principled. I

wasn't someone who practiced the truth at all. Isn't that exactly how a people-pleaser acts? After that, I read a passage of God's words exposing antichrists: **"To all appearances, the antichrists' words seem especially kind, cultured, and distinguished. No matter who violates principle or disrupts and disturbs church work, the antichrist does not expose or criticize these people; they turn a blind eye, letting people think they are magnanimous in all matters. Regardless of what corruptions people reveal and what evil deeds they do, the antichrist is understanding and tolerant. They do not grow angry, or fly into a rage, they will not get cross and blame people when they do something wrong and harm the interests of God's house. No matter who commits evil and disturbs the work of the church, they pay no heed, as if this has nothing to do with them, and they will never offend people because of it. What are the antichrists most concerned with? With how many people think highly of them, and with how many people see them when they suffer, and praise them for it. The antichrists believe that suffering must never be for nothing; no matter what hardship they endure, what price they pay, what good deeds they do, how caring, considerate, and loving they are toward others, this must all be carried out in front of others so that more people can see it. And what is their aim in acting thus? To buy people's favor, to make more people approve of their actions, their conduct, and their character in their hearts, giving a thumbs up. There are even antichrists that try to establish an image of themselves as 'a good person' through this outwardly good behavior, so that more people come to them looking for help"** (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Nine (Part Ten)). I felt so guilty after reading God's words, as if God were right in front of me, exposing my satanic disposition. I reflected that I was always trying to be an understanding, kind person because I felt that doing

so would gain me respect and praise from others—I would be liked by the people around me. I was like that when doing a duty with other brothers and sisters, too. On the surface, I hadn't exposed Kevin's issues for fear of harming his pride and our ongoing partnership. But in fact, everything I did had been to protect my own name and status. I'd been using surface-level kindness to disguise myself and make myself look good, to curry favor so people would think I was loving, patient, and tolerant—that I was a good, kind person. But I hadn't taken to heart whether the church's work or brothers' and sisters' lives were harmed. Only then did I see how slippery and deceitful I was. It looked like I never offended anyone, like I was a good person, but in fact, my own vile motives were behind all of my actions. I saw that I had the same disposition as an antichrist, that I was sacrificing the church's interests to uphold my own image and status. I would be in great danger if I remained on this path—I would become more and more distant from God and end up spurned by Him! I really despised myself when I realized this, and also felt quite upset. I said a prayer: "God, I'm always disguising myself and making myself look good, focusing on creating a positive image. I don't want to stay on this path. I wish to repent, and rebel against my corrupt disposition."

I read more of God's words after that: **"The standard by which humans judge other humans is based on their behavior; those whose conduct is good are righteous, while those whose conduct is abominable are evil. The standard by which God judges humans is based on whether their essence submits to Him or not; one who submits to God is a righteous person, while one who does not is an enemy and an evil person, regardless of whether this person's behavior is good or bad and regardless of whether their speech is correct or incorrect"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. God and Man Will Enter Into Rest Together). **"It may be**

**that in all your years of faith in God, you have never cursed anyone or committed a bad deed, yet in your association with Christ, you cannot speak the truth, act honestly, or submit to the word of Christ; in that case, I say that you are the most sinister and malicious person in the world. You may be exceptionally amiable and devoted toward your relatives, friends, wife (or husband), sons and daughters, and parents, and never take advantage of others, but if you are incapable of compatibility with Christ, if you are unable to interact in harmony with Him, then even if you expend your all in relief to your neighbors or take meticulous care of your father, mother, and members of your household, I would say that you are still an evil person, and moreover one full of cunning tricks”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Those

Who Are Incompatible With Christ Are Surely Opponents of God). I could see from God's words that people's standard for measuring others is based on how well they behave. Those who behave well are good people, while those who behave badly are bad people. But God's standard is based on whether they follow His way, and on their essence and their attitude toward submitting to God. It isn't based on how nice their outward behavior is. I had always considered myself a good person, because I'd never argued or started conflict with anyone, family or otherwise, since I was a child. Even if someone started arguing with me, I'd resolve it by placating them. My fellow villagers always praised me for being a good person; I also thought being this way meant I'd reached the standard of a good person. Now it had become apparent to me that although I wasn't appearing to do evil, I wasn't being honest in word or deed. I'd seen that Kevin doing his duty without principle, and showing off constantly, had impacted the effectiveness of our work. Yet to protect my image as a good person, I hadn't exposed or helped him, and I hadn't upheld the church's interests. So even though others

thought I was a good person, before God I was still counter to Him and the truth, and I was, in essence, doing evil. I saw that judging whether someone was good or evil based on external behaviors wasn't the right standard. Some people seem to do a lot of nice things, but they strongly resist and condemn God's work and words. They are evil people. I thought of a sister I worked with. As far as I could tell, she didn't care about being warm or kind in her words, but she had a relatively strong sense of justice. She said what needed to be said when she saw others not acting according to the truth. She helped her brothers and sisters seek the truth and do their duty according to principle, providing them with real benefits. Thinking about this gave me some resolve to stop following my mistaken perspectives on trying to seem like a nice person. I had to act according to the truth of God's words, and pursue being a truly good person.

I read a passage of God's words that gave me a path of practice. Almighty God says: **“What people should strive to achieve most is to make the words of God their basis, and the truth their criterion; only then can they live in the light and live out the likeness of a normal person. If you wish to live in the light, you should act according to the truth; you should be an honest person who says honest words and does honest things. What is fundamental is to have the truth principles in one's comportment; once people lose the truth principles, and focus only on good behavior, this inevitably gives rise to fakery and pretense. If there is no principle to people's comportment, then no matter how good their behavior is, they are hypocrites; they may be able to mislead others for a time, but they will never be trustworthy. Only when people act and comport themselves according to God's words do they have a true foundation. If they do not comport themselves according to God's words, and only focus on pretending to behave well, can they become**

good people as a result? Absolutely not. Good doctrines and behavior cannot change man's corrupt dispositions, and they cannot change his essence. Only the truth and the words of God can change people's corrupt dispositions, thoughts, and opinions, and become their life. ... God demands that people tell the truth, say what they think, and not trick, mislead, make fun of, satirize, deride, mock, or constrict others, or expose their weaknesses, or hurt them. Are these not the principles of speech? What does it mean to say one should not expose people's weaknesses? It means not to get dirt on other people. Do not hold on to their past mistakes or shortcomings in order to judge or condemn them. This is the least you should do. On the proactive side, how is constructive speech expressed? It is mainly encouraging, orienting, guiding, exhorting, understanding, and comforting. Also, in some special instances, it becomes necessary to directly expose other people's errors and prune them, so that they gain knowledge of the truth and desire to repent. Only then is the due effect achieved. This way of practicing is of great benefit to people. It is a real help to them, and it is **constructive for them, is it not?"** (The Word, Vol. 6. On the Pursuit of the Truth I. What It Means to Pursue the Truth (3)). In God's words, I found the principle for conducting myself. We need to be honest people according to His words. When we see others' problems we should point them out and help them—this is of benefit to them. We should protect the church's work and be edifying for others. I wanted to put the truth into practice immediately once I understood this path, to have a heart-to-heart with Kevin and bring up his issues. This would be in order to rectify his attitude toward his duty and allow him to understand his corrupt disposition and the deviations in his duty—it would be to help him. So I sought him out, ready to point out his problems. Just then, I again felt some concern, worried about what he



would think of me. I quickly prayed to God, rebelling against these incorrect motives that I harbored. I thought about how recently I hadn't been practicing the truth, which was hurting our work, and I felt really guilty. I knew that God examines my every thought and deed, and that I had to be an honest person. I couldn't protect my image and violate the truth anymore. This thought gave me the courage to rebel against my corrupt disposition and talk to Kevin truthfully about his issues. To my surprise, he heard me out and was able to accept it. He said, "I haven't fully understood some principles. In the future please tell me about any issues you see. We can help each other and do our duty well together." I was thrilled to hear him say this, and so grateful to God. I also felt ashamed and regretful for not having already put the truth into practice. If I'd brought this up with him before, we could have improved our work results sooner, and he would have learned about his corrupt disposition earlier. I saw that practicing the truth is of benefit to others, to one's self, and to one's duty.

Now, when I see brothers' and sisters' issues I actively point them out, because I know this is practicing the truth and is helping them. I've also seen that living according to God's requirements and doing things by the truth principles is the only way to practice the truth and be a good person.

## 80. My Story of Welcoming the Lord

By Su Yang, China

When I was little, I had such severe pain in my legs that I couldn't walk, so my mother brought me before the Lord Jesus. To my surprise, my legs miraculously healed less than a month later. To repay the Lord's love, I dropped out of school in 1997 and began enthusiastically expending myself for the Lord. Soon after, the church identified me as an important candidate for training. Elder Qu would frequently take me around to preach at different churches. At that time, the pastors and elders would often say that the Lord's day was imminent, and that we should be like the wise virgins who prepared lamp oil and awaited the Lord's coming. They also said, "In the Bible it is written, **'Behold, He comes with clouds; and every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him'** (Revelation 1:7). When the Lord returns in the last days, He will come with the clouds in great glory and rapture us up into the sky to meet Him. We'll enter into the kingdom of heaven and enjoy eternal blessings. Nonbelievers will wail and gnash their teeth as they succumb to calamities." Hearing the elders' and pastors' animated sermons, I immediately envisioned us all happily gathering around as the Lord descended to earth with the clouds in great glory. You can imagine how excited I was at the thought of such a stirring scene.

Then, one day early in 1999, Elder Qu and parish Elder He called the co-workers together and said: "A new church called 'Eastern Lightning' has arisen and claims the Lord has already become flesh and returned, expressing words, and performing the work of judgment starting from God's house. But how could this be? The scriptures clearly state that the Lord will descend with the clouds, yet they claim the Lord has returned

incarnate. This does not correspond with the Bible, so you shouldn't listen to their sermons or read their books, much less host them. Whoever hosts them will be expelled from the church!" When they said that, I thought: "The elders have been believers for years and are well-versed in the Bible, so they must be right. What's more, the scriptures clearly state that the Lord will descend upon the clouds, so how could He have come incarnate? I still have small stature, so I shouldn't come into contact with people from Eastern Lightning, or I could be led astray." But not long after that, many of my co-workers and fellow believers converted to Eastern Lightning. Elder He emphasized that we should break ties with these co-workers and believers. He also told us to get the word out to all the churches that they mustn't allow anyone to convert to Eastern Lightning. After that, I went to all the congregation points under my supervision and sealed off the churches. I also repeatedly emphasized: "When the Lord comes, it will be on clouds, not as flesh. Any messages that the Lord has returned incarnate are false." Hearing this, the believers all nodded their heads and said that if anyone else came to spread the gospel, they would drive them off. In order to keep the brothers and sisters from hearing Eastern Lightning's preaching, I worked non-stop to lock down the churches. But despite my best efforts, a steady stream of co-workers and believers were still converting to Eastern Lightning.

One day, while I was at the home of a co-worker, he told me that co-worker Li and other believers were investigating Eastern Lightning. A few other co-workers and I rushed over to stop them. I told them: "The scriptures say that the Lord will descend with the clouds and that all will witness His descent. So we can't believe these Eastern Lightning people when they say the Lord has returned incarnate." To my surprise, no sooner than the words left my mouth, one of them said: "What they preach is very

insightful and it accords with the Bible. Why can't we listen to them? Who can fathom God's work? I think we should continue investigating." Hearing that made me anxious and I was about to continue dissuading them, but then, all of a sudden, my throat seized up and I had a coughing fit. My face was beet red and tears were streaming from my eyes—I couldn't get a single word out. Everyone there just stared in shock. My co-workers rushed to pour me a glass of water, but I kept coughing even after drinking it. I was really panicked and kept praying to the Lord, asking Him to stop my coughing. Seeing the state I was in, another co-worker continued speaking in my place, but after just a few comments, he hastily wrapped up the meeting. It was an incredibly awkward scene. Afterward I couldn't help but wonder: "I was defending the Lord's way and protecting the flock, so why did I fall into a coughing fit at the most crucial moment? Why didn't the Lord hear my prayers? Could it be that my words were not in keeping with His intentions?" Not long after that, I fell ill. I had a headache, felt dizzy, and my stomach felt uncomfortable. Lying there feeble and faint on my bed, I called out to the Lord over and over. But no matter how I beseeched Him, my condition just wouldn't improve. I couldn't help but think: "Am I not devoted enough to the Lord? I've done my utmost to protect His flock, so why have I fallen ill?" I racked my brains seeking an answer, but I couldn't figure it out.

In the fall of 1999, Elder He got in a car accident on his way back from sealing off a church. He passed out in the crash and sustained a serious head injury, then was in critical condition for several days before finally stabilizing. I was shocked to hear this: Elder He had been working for the Lord for years, through thick and thin, and he had traveled far and suffered to protect the flock and keep believers from accepting Eastern Lightning. Why would something like this happen to him? But I only considered this

briefly and then put the thought aside. One afternoon several months later, I heard that some more believers were looking into Eastern Lightning, so two sisters and I rushed over on our bikes and told them lots of rumors and fallacies to threaten and obstruct them. This scared them and they said that they wouldn't listen to Eastern Lightning's sermons anymore. Only after hearing that did I finally feel a bit relieved. But then, when I was cycling home, I lost my balance while passing over a slope, my vision went black, and I fell to the ground with my bike, landing two meters away. I immediately felt dizzy and my whole body was in pain. I had broken a collarbone in the crash, and this sudden accident left me baffled and confused: "Doesn't the Lord Jesus bestow us with peace and joy? Why did this happen to me while I was defending the Lord's way and protecting His flock? Could this Eastern Lightning that I'm resisting really be the return of the Lord? But the Bible clearly states that the Lord will descend upon the clouds, and Eastern Lightning testifies that He has returned incarnate. It can't be the true way! Is the Lord testing me because I'm not devoted enough to Him? Or have I offended Him in some way?" I was really bewildered and couldn't grasp the Lord's intention. After that, I felt increasingly dark and depleted inside. When I read the Bible, I didn't gain any insight and I had nothing to say in my sermons. Even my prayers felt dry and dull. I felt as though the Lord was no longer with me. Many of our believers were also becoming tepid in their faith. During congregations, most people just made small talk or dozed off, and many co-workers and believers had even left the church and returned to the secular world. What was most disappointing for me was all the jealousy and contention among my co-workers. During meetings, the elders and co-workers would be at each other's throats over the smallest thing and would part on bad terms. When I saw all this, I just couldn't understand how the church had become

this way. I began to get fed up with congregations and even considered returning to secular life.

Then, one day in 2002, my mother excitedly told me: “The long-awaited return of the Lord Jesus has arrived. He has become flesh to express words and perform the work of judgment.” I was shocked when I heard this. Wasn’t this what Eastern Lightning was preaching? Had my mom converted to Eastern Lightning? Before she had even finished speaking, I asked her: “Who told you that the Lord Jesus has returned? Have you forgotten that the Bible clearly says that when the Lord comes, He will descend in glory upon the clouds and this will shake the heavens and the earth? You say the Lord has returned, so why haven’t we seen any of these signs? You say that the Lord has become flesh to do the work of judgment, but how could that be? You can’t just believe anything you hear.” Seeing how obstinate I was, my mother went into her room and emerged with an exquisitely bound book. She said eagerly: “Almighty God is the returned Lord Jesus. These are the new words that He has expressed. Read it and you’ll see.” The book was brand new and the title **The Word Appears in the Flesh** was printed in large gold lettering on the cover. I immediately thought of the clergy’s warning: “You mustn’t read their book. If you read it, you’ll be taken in.” So I said: “Mom, you shouldn’t believe this stuff. You haven’t read much of the Bible, but I’m well-versed in it and have attended a number of revival meetings. Do you really think you know better than me? If you stray in your faith, won’t all your years in the church have been in vain?” I kept trying to persuade my mom not to join Eastern Lightning. But no matter what I said, my mother wouldn’t relent or change her mind at all. She even earnestly said to me: “Almighty God really is the Lord Jesus we’ve been longing for all along. He is God’s Spirit become flesh once more to speak and work. **The Word Appears in the Flesh** are

the very words that God has spoken Himself in the last days and it unveils all the mysteries of the Bible. You've never read Almighty God's words, so how do you know they aren't the words of the Lord returned? The Bible says: 'Faith comes by hearing' (Romans 10:17). You have closed your eyes and your ears, so how do you expect to welcome the Lord? Think about it: If the Lord really has returned, and you don't greet Him, won't you regret missing that opportunity?" After hearing what she had to say, I couldn't think of a good rebuttal, so I just sulkily replied: "I won't read this book, I only read the Bible. We've enjoyed so much of the Lord's grace—I can't be ungrateful! No matter what you say, I won't betray the Lord!" Seeing my attitude, she just sighed with frustration and got up to prepare dinner. Not long after, I heard the faint sounds of music coming from the kitchen. The song had a beautiful melody, but when I listened closely, I realized that it wasn't any of the hymns I'd learned before. I knew my mom was playing it for me to hear, so I immediately left. After that, my mom started playing hymns at home a lot, and, at night, I would often hear her praying for me in tears. I couldn't help but think: "My mom is a strong-minded person, she must have done some diligent seeking on welcoming the Lord. Could Eastern Lightning really be the return of the Lord Jesus? Otherwise, why would my mom be so anxious and worried in her prayers for me?" But then I thought of what the pastors and elders said and I decided to adhere to the Lord's way and not relent. After that, I grew more distant from my mother.

One day, my mom put on a hymn in her room again while I was sitting on the living room couch. The lyrics of the hymn drew me in:

**1 This time, God has become flesh to perform the work that He has not yet completed, to judge this age and bring it to a close, to save man from the sea of suffering, to thoroughly conquer humanity, and to change people's life dispositions. Many are the sleepless nights that God**

**has endured to free man from suffering and from the dark forces that are as black as night, and for the sake of the work of mankind. He has descended from the highest to the lowest of places to live in this human hell and pass His days with man. God has never complained of the shabbiness among man, nor has He ever asked too much of man; rather, God has endured the greatest humiliation while carrying out His work. So that all of humanity may soon enjoy rest, God has endured humiliation and suffered injustice to come to earth, and personally entered into the tiger's den to save mankind.**

**2 So many times has He faced the stars, so many times has He departed at dawn and returned at dusk; He has endured extreme agony and been subjected to people's attacks and breaking. God has come to this land of filth, quietly enduring man's ravages and oppression, yet He has never fought back or made any excessive demands of people. He has performed all the work that is necessary for mankind: teaching, enlightening and reproaching people, refining them with His words, as well as reminding, exhorting, consoling, judging, and exposing them. Every step He takes is for the sake of people's lives, is meant to cleanse them. Despite having removed their prospects and fate, everything God does is for the sake of humanity. Every step He takes is for their survival, so that people can have a beautiful destination on earth.**

—The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Work and Entry

The lyrics of this hymn spoke to me deeply. I couldn't help but think of how the Lord Jesus became flesh to redeem mankind. He was hunted and persecuted by the Roman government, condemned and abandoned by the religious world, jeered at and slandered by the world. Despite all this, He still expressed truths to supply and feed people, healed them and drove out their demons, and was ultimately crucified as an everlasting sin offering for



mankind, redeeming all of humanity from sin. When I thought of the Lord Jesus' love for humankind and compared it to the lyrics of this hymn which spoke of how God suffers for the sake of man, my numbed and hardened heart felt deeply shaken and tears came streaming from my eyes. "Could Almighty God really be the returned Lord Jesus? Who else but God could express such words? Who else could pay such a price for man?" After that, I heard another hymn: **"The innocent, after all, have grown numb; why must God always make things difficult for them? Feeble man is utterly bereft of perseverance; why should God always have such unabating anger toward him? Weak and powerless man no longer has the slightest vitality; why should God always chide him for his rebelliousness? Who can withstand the threats of God in heaven? Man, after all, is fragile, and in desperate straits, God has pushed His anger deep into His heart, so that man may slowly reflect upon himself"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Work and Entry (8)). The lyrics had a deep impact on me. They spoke of God's profound concern and care for humankind, which is akin to a mother continually calling out to her disobedient child, even after they have broken her heart, hoping that they'll emerge from the haze they're in and return to her side. I felt that these words were God's voice. I couldn't help but think of all the times that I had disagreed with my mom during that period: No matter how she tried to persuade me, I wouldn't listen. When she played readings of God's word and hymns for me, I even resisted and avoided listening without the slightest intention of investigating His new work. Was I even a Christian? After that, I wasn't as resistant when my mom played hymns.

One day, I heard this hymn: **"The return of Jesus is a great salvation for those who are capable of accepting the truth, but for those who are unable to accept the truth it is a sign of condemnation. You should**

**choose your own path, and should not blaspheme against the Holy Spirit and reject the truth. You should not be an ignorant and arrogant person, but someone who submits to the guidance of the Holy Spirit and longs for and seeks the truth; only in this way will you benefit”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. By the Time You Behold the Spiritual Body of Jesus, God Will Have Made Heaven and Earth Anew). After hearing it, I was suddenly seized with worry: “If Almighty God really is the returned Lord Jesus, won’t I be condemned for not accepting Him? Offending God is a serious matter—it is a sin that won’t be forgiven in this life or the world to come!” I also thought of how the Lord Jesus said: **“Blessed are they which do hunger and thirst after righteousness: for they shall be filled”** (Matthew 5:6). The Lord Jesus taught us that we can only receive God’s abundant sustenance by seeking and thirsting for the truth. But if I investigated Eastern Lightning and was misled, wouldn’t all my years of faith be in vain? I kept going back and forth and couldn’t decide what to do, so I reached out to the Lord in prayer: “Oh Lord, I’m feeling really conflicted. These words seem to be Your voice, but I’m scared that if I’m wrong, I may be betraying You. Lord, I’m not sure if Almighty God is You returned. If this truly is Your work, please enlighten me. If it is not, please help me to stand my ground against it.”

A few days later, my mom pulled out **The Word Appears in the Flesh** again and said to me: “Give Almighty God’s words a proper read and you’ll know that He is the returned Lord Jesus. If you don’t investigate, how will you know if He’s the Lord returned? It’s like a superb banquet: If you just look at it but don’t eat any of the food, you’ll never know what it tastes like. We believe in the true God, so what are you afraid of? I’m your mother—do you really think I’d do you harm?” My mom’s words were quite convincing. I thought, “It’s true, I’ve only ever listened to the pastors

and elders and parroted their words, I've never read Almighty God's words or listened to Eastern Lightning's sermons. So how would I know if Almighty God is the returned Lord Jesus? Didn't I confirm that the Lord Jesus was the Redeemer by reading the Bible?" At this thought, I picked up the book and started leafing through it. I saw that Almighty God says: **"Perhaps, having heard the way of truth and having read the word of life, you believe that only one in 10,000 of these words are in line with your convictions and the Bible, and then you should continue to seek in that 10,000th of these words. I still advise you to be humble, to not be over-confident, and to not exalt yourself too highly. With the bit of a God-fearing heart you possess, you will gain greater light. If you carefully examine and repeatedly contemplate these words, you shall understand whether or not they are the truth, and whether or not they are life"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. By the Time You Behold the Spiritual Body of Jesus, God Will Have Made Heaven and Earth Anew). Reading this earnest exhortation, I began to feel nervous and scared, thinking: "Could these really be the words of God? Why else would it say that it is the word of life and the way of truth? Why would it ask people to keep seeking if even just the smallest part of it lines up with their convictions and the Bible." I decided to investigate it. Otherwise, I might miss my opportunity to welcome the Lord, and then it would be too late for regrets. So I continued reading and came upon this passage: **"It is My hope that each and every brother and sister who seeks the appearance of God will not repeat the tragedy of history. You must not become the Pharisees of modern times and nail God to the cross again. You should carefully consider how to welcome the return of God, and you should have a clear mind regarding how to be someone who submits to the truth. This is the responsibility of everyone who is waiting for Jesus to return riding**

**upon a cloud. We should rub our spiritual eyes to make them clear, and not become mired in words of exaggerated fantasy. We should think about the realistic work of God, and take a look at the practical aspect of God. Do not get carried away or lose yourselves in daydreams, always longing for the day when the Lord Jesus, riding upon a cloud, suddenly descends among you, and takes you who have never known or seen Him, and who do not know how to follow His will. It is better to think upon more practical matters!”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Preface). Reading this was a bit confusing for me. In the Bible, it clearly states that the Lord will return in great glory upon the clouds, so why did this passage say: **“We should rub our spiritual eyes to make them clear, and not become mired in words of exaggerated fantasy,”** and **“Do not get carried away or lose yourselves in daydreams, always longing for the day when the Lord Jesus, riding upon a cloud, suddenly descends among you”**? Would the Lord really not return upon the clouds? What exactly was going on? I turned the matter over and over in my mind but still couldn’t figure it out. Then it occurred to me that believers in Almighty God came to our house a lot, so I could just ask them and see what they said.

One day, Sister Mu Yu from The Church of Almighty God came to our house and I told her about my confusion. She smiled and replied: “It’s true that the Bible mentions the Lord returning upon the clouds, but it also contains other prophecies about how He will return. **‘As the lightning comes out of the east, and shines even to the west; so shall also the coming of the Son of man be’** (Matthew 24:27). **‘For as the lightning, that lightens out of the one part under heaven, shines to the other part under heaven; so shall also the Son of man be in His day. But first must He suffer many things, and be rejected of this generation’** (Luke 17:24–25).

And, **‘Be you therefore ready also: for the Son of man comes at an hour when you think not’** (Luke 12:40). **‘If therefore you shall not watch, I will come on you as a thief, and you shall not know what hour I will come on you’** (Revelation 3:3). **‘Behold, I come as a thief’** (Revelation 16:15). **‘And at midnight there was a cry made, Behold, the bridegroom comes; go you out to meet him’** (Matthew 25:6). Also, **‘Behold, I stand at the door, and knock: if any man hears My voice, and opens the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me’** (Revelation 3:20). In these verses, why is it that the Lord keeps emphasizing **‘the coming of the Son of man,’ ‘the Son of man comes,’** and **‘the Son of man be in His day’**? What is **‘the Son of man’** referring to? It’s referring to God’s Spirit becoming flesh as the Son of man. God’s Spirit alone could not be called the Son of man. Also, the Lord mentions over and over that He will return **‘as a thief,’** and says, **‘at midnight there was a cry made.’** This suggests that when the Lord Jesus returns, He will do so quietly, that He’ll become incarnate as the Son of man and descend in secret without anyone discovering what has happened. This is just like when God’s Spirit became incarnate as the Lord Jesus to appear and work. The Lord Jesus looked like a normal person, and He traveled all around preaching, but no one recognized that He was God incarnate, that He was the manifestation of Christ. So, we can be completely sure that when the Lord returns in the last days, He will become incarnate as the Son of man to appear and work.” I was really taken aback when Mu Yu said this. The pastors and elders would often say that **“the Son of man”** referred to the Lord Jesus, not the Lord’s return. I thought to myself: “The pastors and elders are well-versed in the Bible, so they can’t be wrong. Mu Yu was probably unfamiliar with the Bible and made a mistake.” Realizing this, I hurriedly said: “Mu Yu, the pastors and elders told us, **‘the Son of man’** refers to the Lord Jesus, not the

returned Lord incarnate.” She patiently replied: “Sister, these verses all clearly state that they are prophecies of the Lord Jesus’ return. Anyone capable of understanding will be clear on this. How could this be referring to the Lord Jesus? Aren’t the pastors and elders misinterpreting the Lord’s words? Also, look at the Gospel of Luke, 17:24–25: **‘For as the lightning, that lightens out of the one part under heaven, shines to the other part under heaven; so shall also the Son of man be in His day. But first must He suffer many things, and be rejected of this generation.’** In these verses, the Lord is prophesying what the situation will be like upon His return. If the Lord returned in great glory with the clouds, then everyone would certainly be terrified and would fall to the ground. Who would dare resist and reject the Lord then? Then how would the prophecy, **‘But first must He suffer many things, and be rejected of this generation’** be fulfilled? So according to the Lord’s words, there is no doubt that He will return incarnate as the Son of man. Almighty God’s appearance and work in the last days completely fulfill the Lord Jesus’ prophecies.”

After hearing Mu Yu’s fellowship, I felt really ashamed. Her fellowship was well-grounded and it completely convinced me. I finally realized why, when the Lord Jesus spoke of His return, He’d always mention **“the coming of the Son of man,” “the Son of man comes,”** and **“the Son of man be in His day.”** He repeatedly stressed **“the Son of man”** to tell us that He’d return in the flesh, appearing and working as the Son of man. I was surprised that even though I knew the Bible well and often explained it to other people, I still had never noticed that it stated so clearly that He’d return as the Son of man to appear and work. I had just blindly believed what the pastors and elders told me. I was really so muddled in my faith, and all my years of Bible study had been in vain. I didn’t have the slightest understanding of the Lord’s words and was still blindly arrogant

and passing my own verdicts. I lacked all reason! I was glad that I had been able to quiet my heart and listen to Mu Yu's fellowship. If I had only listened to the pastors' and elders' words, I'd still be staring at the clouds, waiting for the Lord to descend upon them, and ultimately, I would have been abandoned and eliminated by God. Mu Yu continued her fellowship, saying: "God's return in the last days takes place in two stages. First, He becomes flesh and arrives in secret, then, later, He will come in the clouds and appear openly. Almighty God's appearance and work in the flesh is happening right now—it is the first stage of His return, where He arrives and works in secret. He is doing His work of judgment by expressing the truth, so that He can purify and save humanity, and allow man to completely break free from sin and become holy. Those who truly believe in God and long for His appearance can recognize God's voice in the words of Almighty God, ascertain that He is the returned Lord Jesus, and turn to Him. They are all wise virgins that have been brought before God's throne and are now receiving and experiencing the judgment and purification of God's words. So we can't possibly see the Lord appearing openly with the clouds during this time. It will only be after God has created a group of overcomers that His secret work in the flesh will come to an end. Only then will He bring the disasters down upon mankind, reward the good and punish the evil, and finally descend with the clouds, revealing Himself to all nations and peoples. At that time, those who previously condemned and resisted Almighty God will be filled with regret. They will beat their chests, weep and gnash their teeth in the disasters when they see that they were resisting the returned Lord Jesus. This completely fulfills the prophecy in Revelation: **'Behold, He comes with clouds; and every eye shall see Him, and they also which pierced Him: and all kindreds of the earth shall wail because of Him'** (Revelation 1:7)."

After that, Mu Yu read a passage of Almighty God's words for me: **"Many people may not care what I say, but I still want to tell every so-called saint who follows Jesus that, when you see Jesus descend from the heaven upon a white cloud with your own eyes, this will be the public appearance of the Sun of righteousness. Perhaps that will be a time of great excitement for you, yet you should know that the time when you witness Jesus descend from the heaven is also the time when you go down to hell to be punished. That will be the time of the end of God's management plan and it will be when God rewards the good and punishes the evil. For the judgment of God will have ended before man sees signs, when there is only the expression of truth. Those who accept the truth and do not seek signs, and thus have been purified, shall have returned before the throne of God and entered the Creator's embrace. Only those who persist in the belief that 'The Jesus who does not ride upon a white cloud is a false christ' shall be subjected to everlasting punishment, for they only believe in the Jesus who exhibits signs, but do not acknowledge the Jesus who proclaims severe judgment and releases the true way and life. And so it can only be that Jesus deals with them when He openly returns upon a white cloud. They are too stubborn, too confident in themselves, too arrogant. How could such degenerates be rewarded by Jesus? The return of Jesus is a great salvation for those who are capable of accepting the truth, but for those who are unable to accept the truth it is a sign of condemnation. You should choose your own path, and should not blaspheme against the Holy Spirit and reject the truth. You should not be an ignorant and arrogant person, but someone who submits to the guidance of the Holy Spirit and longs for and seeks the truth; only in this way will you benefit"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. By the Time You Behold the



Spiritual Body of Jesus, God Will Have Made Heaven and Earth Anew). After hearing Almighty God's words, I put aside my pride and finally saw that I had been harboring many notions and imaginings about the Lord's coming. It was no wonder that I had waited all those years without seeing the Lord descend upon the clouds. He was going to return incarnate and in secret first, express His words to save humanity, and create a group of overcomers before the calamities began. Only then would He come with the clouds and appear openly. But I'd been misled by the clergy, taking passages out of context and clinging to the words of the Bible. I almost missed my chance to welcome the Lord, and was very close to being abandoned by Him. That was really dangerous!

Mu Yu continued her fellowship: "We all know that 2,000 years ago, all the Israelites were awaiting the Messiah, but when the Lord Jesus came and worked, the Pharisees clung to the words of the Scripture, and were full of notions regarding the Messiah's arrival. They believed that when God came, He'd be called Messiah. They thought that He'd be born into an aristocratic family, have royal status and power, and that He would free them from the Roman government's rule. But when the Lord Jesus came, He wasn't called Messiah. He was born into a family of commoners, birthed in a stable, and He was even persecuted and hunted. So they denied and condemned Him, and ultimately had Him nailed to the cross. By committing this heinous sin, they incurred God's curses and punishment which led to the subjugation of the Israelites for 2,000 years. This is a truly harrowing lesson! The root cause of their failure is worth reflecting on. If we do not gain insight on this, we're likely to follow the same God-resisting path as the Pharisees when it comes to the great matter of awaiting the Lord's coming." When Mu Yu finished, she showed me another passage of Almighty God's words: **"Do you wish to know the root of why the**

**Pharisees opposed Jesus? Do you wish to know the essence of the Pharisees? They were full of fantasies about the Messiah. What is more, they believed only that the Messiah would come, yet did not pursue the life truth. And so, even today they still await the Messiah, for they have no knowledge of the way of life, and do not know what the way of truth is. How, say you, could such foolish, stubborn and ignorant people gain God's blessing? How could they behold the Messiah? They opposed Jesus because they did not know the direction of the Holy Spirit's work, because they did not know the way of truth spoken by Jesus, and, furthermore, because they did not understand the Messiah. And since they had never seen the Messiah and had never been in the company of the Messiah, they made the mistake of clinging to the mere name of the Messiah while opposing the essence of the Messiah by any means possible. These Pharisees in essence were stubborn, arrogant, and did not obey the truth. The principle of their belief in God was: No matter how profound Your preaching, no matter how high Your authority, You are not Christ unless You are called the Messiah. Is this belief not preposterous and ridiculous?"** (The Word, Vol. 1.

The Appearance and Work of God. By the Time You Behold the Spiritual Body of Jesus, God Will Have Made Heaven and Earth Anew). Mu Yu fellowshiped, saying: "Almighty God has revealed the essence and root cause of the Pharisees' resistance toward the Lord Jesus. The Pharisees were stubborn and arrogant in nature, they were averse to the truth, and hated it. What's more, they didn't understand God's work and clung to the words of the Scripture, passing their own verdicts on God's appearance and work according to their own notions and imaginings. Even when the Lord Jesus expressed many truths and performed plenty of signs and miracles, they didn't seek on or accept this at all. They stubbornly held to the words of the Scripture, and tried to get

leverage on the Lord at every turn in order to condemn and resist Him, and finally had Him crucified. So, in our approach to the Lord's coming in the last days, we must learn from the brutal lesson of the Pharisees' failure, let go of our notions and imaginings, and investigate God's appearance and work. Only by doing this can we hope to welcome the Lord. The pastors and elders of the present-day religious world are just like the Pharisees. When they hear people bearing witness to the Lord's coming, they don't seek or investigate it at all and stubbornly cling to the Bible passage about the Lord coming in the clouds. They say, 'Whoever claims to be the Lord Jesus but does not come upon the clouds is a false christ,' wantonly resisting and condemning Almighty God, and actively preventing believers from investigating the true way. If they never repent, they will be exposed by God's work in the last days as false believers and antichrists, and once God's work of salvation is over, they'll cry and gnash their teeth as they succumb to the unprecedented calamities."

Hearing this left me frightened and trembling. I compared my behavior to what she'd said: I had clung to the words of the Bible when it came to welcoming the Lord, and believed, based on my own notions, that the Lord would arrive with the clouds. When I heard people saying that the Lord Jesus had returned, not only did I not investigate it, I went along with the pastors and elders in blindly resisting and condemning it, spreading all kinds of rumors to slander and malign Almighty God, misleading believers and keeping them from investigating the true way. There was no difference between my behavior and that of the Pharisees who resisted the Lord Jesus. I was a modern-day Pharisee, a stumbling block obstructing believers from investigating the true way. If not for God's mercy or Mu Yu fellowshiping on the truth with me, allowing me to hear God's voice, then someone as stubborn and intransigent as I could only end up being abandoned,

eliminated, cursed, and punished by God. I wanted to make sense of my confusions, so I sought from Mu Yu: “Given that the Lord has first become flesh to do His work in secret, how can we be sure that Almighty God is the incarnate God, Christ of the last days?” Mu Yu read me a few more passages of Almighty God’s words: **“The ‘incarnation’ is God’s appearance in the flesh; God works among created mankind in the image of the flesh. So for God to be incarnated, He must first be flesh, flesh with normal humanity; this is the most basic prerequisite. In fact, the implication of God’s incarnation is that God lives and works in the flesh, that God in His very essence becomes flesh, becomes a man”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. The Essence of the Flesh Inhabited by God). **“The incarnate God is called Christ, and Christ is the flesh donned by the Spirit of God. This flesh is unlike any man that is of the flesh. This difference is because Christ is the incarnation of the Spirit, rather than being fleshly. He has both a normal humanity and a complete divinity. His divinity is not possessed by any man. His normal humanity sustains all His normal activities in the flesh, while His divinity carries out the work of God Himself”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. The Essence of Christ Is Submission to the Will of the Heavenly Father). **“He who is God incarnate shall possess the essence of God, and He who is God incarnate shall possess the expression of God. Since God becomes flesh, He shall bring forth the work He intends to do, and since God becomes flesh, He shall express what He is, and shall be able to bring the truth to man, bestow life upon him, and point the way for him. Flesh that does not have the essence of God is decidedly not the incarnate God; of this there is no doubt. If man intends to inquire into whether it is God’s incarnate flesh, then he must corroborate this from the disposition He expresses and the words He speaks. Which is to say, to corroborate whether or**

**not it is God's incarnate flesh, and whether or not it is the true way, one must discriminate on the basis of His essence. And so, in determining whether it is the flesh of God incarnate, the key lies in His essence (His work, His utterances, His disposition, and many other aspects), rather than external appearance. If man scrutinizes only His external appearance, and as a result overlooks His essence, this shows that man is benighted and ignorant"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Preface). After she finished reading, Mu Yu fellowshiped: "Almighty God's words clearly tell us that incarnation means that God's Spirit is clothed in flesh to become a normal person, appearing in the world to express the truth and work. Outwardly, Christ looks like a normal person, but God's Spirit is within Him—He is the embodiment of God's Spirit. So Christ not only has normal humanity, but He also has complete divinity, which means that God's inherent disposition, what God has and is, His authority, almightiness, and wisdom are all realized within His incarnate flesh. Christ is God Himself, the Lord of creation. So, Christ can express the truth and unveil mysteries at any given moment, express God's disposition and what He has and is, and perform the work of redeeming and saving humankind. It is just like how the Lord Jesus was the incarnation of God—He was Christ. Even though He looked like a normal person outwardly and really lived among humans on earth, He was able to express the truth and reveal the mysteries of the kingdom of heaven at any time, and He provided humanity with the way of repentance. The Lord Jesus forgave man's sins and expressed God's loving and merciful disposition. He also performed many signs and miracles: He healed the sick, drove out demons, resurrected the dead, calmed the winds and seas, fed 5,000 with five loaves and two fish, and so on. The Lord Jesus' words and work were a complete manifestation of God's authority and power. We all confirmed that the Lord Jesus was

Christ and God incarnate based on His words and work. So when confirming whether or not He was God incarnate, we shouldn't base our evaluation on His outward appearance, what family He was born into, if He had status or power, or whether He was supported or rejected by others, but entirely upon whether He could express the truth and do God's work. That is key. As long as He could express the truth and do the work of saving humankind, then no matter how average He appeared outwardly, and no matter how much He was condemned and rejected, He was still undeniably God incarnate, He was Christ. Since appearing to perform His work, Almighty God has expressed millions of words and revealed all the mysteries of God's management plan. He has revealed the purpose of God's management plan, the truth behind the three stages of His work, the mystery of God's incarnations and names, the truth behind the Bible, how God's work of judgment in the last days purifies and saves people, the outcomes and destinations of each kind of person, how Christ's kingdom is realized on earth, and much more. And that's not all, Almighty God is also judging and exposing people's God-resisting, satanic nature and various corrupt dispositions, and showing people the path to freeing themselves of sin and being saved, among many other things. The truths that have been expressed by Almighty God are just so abundant—He has expressed all the aspects of the truth that we need to attain salvation, and none of these mysteries or truths have ever been heard before by man. God's chosen people are experiencing the judgment and chastisement of His words right now, and they have all gained some actual understanding of their corrupt dispositions and knowledge of God's righteous and majestic disposition. They are gradually being freed from the fetters and constraints of sin, and have changed their life dispositions to varying degrees. Only by reading Almighty God's words and personally experiencing His work in the last

days have we all come to know that Almighty God is God incarnate and Christ of the last days.”

Almighty God’s words and Mu Yu’s fellowship were enlightening. I saw that the key to determining if Almighty God is God incarnate rests upon whether He can express truths, do the work of salvation, and if He can express God’s disposition and what He has and is. It appeared that Almighty God really is God incarnate, the returned Lord Jesus, otherwise, who else could open the scroll and the seven seals to reveal all these hidden mysteries and truths? If not God, who could save mankind from the bondage and shackles of sin?

Mu Yu continued, saying: “In this current appearance, God is primarily expressing His words to identify those who truly yearn for His arrival and can hear His voice. The Lord Jesus said: **‘My sheep hear My voice, and I know them, and they follow Me’** (John 10:27). All of God’s sheep long for the truth. When they hear someone say that the Lord has returned, they seek and investigate the true way. When they read Almighty God’s words, they recognize God’s voice, they accept and follow Almighty God, and have a chance at salvation. Those who are not God’s sheep cannot recognize God’s voice, and they even judge and condemn God’s work in the last days. Ultimately, they will get the punishment they deserve. So, God uses His words to reveal each kind of person in the last days, sorting them according to their kind, after which He will reward the good and punish the evil. This fully manifests God’s righteous disposition.” Hearing this, I bowed my head and tears came streaming down my face. I knew that I had really resisted God. I thought back to when I’d first heard people preaching that the Lord had returned. I hadn’t sought or investigated, I had just blindly obeyed the pastors and elders, spreading lies and intimidating believers to prevent them from investigating the true way. As a result, I fell into a coughing fit which

rendered me unable to speak, I fell ill, I even broke my collarbone, and Elder He got into a car crash. I realized that none of these were mere accidents. They were all punishments and retribution for resisting God! But I had been so numb and didn't know I needed to wake up. I kept condemning and resisting God's appearance and work, thinking I was safeguarding the Lord's way and protecting the flock. I was so numb! Not even in my wildest dreams did I imagine that Eastern Lightning—which I had continually slandered, condemned, and resisted—was actually the Lord Jesus that I had awaited for so long! I felt unspeakably anguished and regretful. I hated myself for being so blind and foolish, for believing in God without recognizing His work, and for following the elders in resisting and condemning God and keeping believers from investigating the true way. Based on my behavior, I really did deserve to be punished by God. But God didn't treat me according to my transgressions, and He had still given me an opportunity to hear His voice. He used my mother playing the hymns of His words for me over and over and Mu Yu's fellowshiping on the truth with me to help my numb, intransigent heart gradually awaken and gain insight, so that I accepted His appearance and work. Thanks be to Almighty God for His mercy and salvation!

After that, I hungrily devoured the words of Almighty God. Through His words, I learned the meaning of His name in each of the ages, the truth behind the Bible, how Satan has corrupted mankind, and how God saves mankind. I also learned that the root cause of man's sinfulness and resistance to God is our satanic nature, and how to seek to rid myself of corruption, and attain salvation, among many other things. I saw that Almighty God's words and work completely fulfill what was said by the Lord Jesus: **"I have yet many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. However, when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide**



**you into all truth: for He shall not speak of Himself; but whatever He shall hear, that shall He speak: and He will show you things to come”**

(John 16:12–13). Almighty God’s words resolved much of my confusion and notions and I became completely sure that they were the personal utterances of God. Almighty God was the returned Lord Jesus that I’d been awaiting for so long. I felt like a child finally reuniting with their long-lost mother. I couldn’t help but hold the book of God’s words close to me and burst into tears. I hated myself for being so blind that I hadn’t recognized God, that I’d mindlessly resisted and condemned His work of the last days, that I’d become a barrier to believers investigating the true way and a person who resisted and fought against God. Realizing this, I felt deep regret and resolved to start spreading the gospel as soon as I could, to bring those I had misled and obstructed before God, and make up for my past transgressions to comfort God’s heart. After that, I joined the ranks of those spreading the gospel. While sharing the gospel, I preached the words of Almighty God, helped others to hear God’s voice, and often told people how I used to cling to the words of the Bible and do evil deeds in resistance to God. I told them to learn from the lessons of my past failures. Seeing more and more people accepting God’s work in the last days, I felt so happy, grounded, and peaceful.

Looking back on the road I’ve traveled, from resisting God to being conquered by His words, I can see what painstaking efforts God made on my account. Despite how rebellious I was, God didn’t abandon me and He even allowed me to hear His voice and welcome Him. That was God’s great love and salvation for me! Thanks be to Almighty God!

# **81. An Unforgettable Experience of Sharing the Gospel**

By Kira, Italy

The gospel experience that left the deepest impression on me happened in April of 2021, when I met a Catholic brother online named Rafael. I testified to God's work in the last days with him, and while fellowshiping I found that his caliber was good and that he was quick to understand the truth. Having read the word of Almighty God, he felt that it was the voice of God and was therefore willing to seek and investigate the true way, and actively participate in gatherings. But to my surprise, a sister sent me a message one day saying that Rafael had run into their old Catholic priest, and that he was no longer coming to gatherings. Hearing this, I thought he must have been instilled with a number of notions and fallacies. I contacted him immediately and learned that he had been confused by what we had been saying, but he didn't say what he was confused about. At the time, I didn't know how I should fellowship with him, my mind drew a blank. I just didn't know what to do. I kept calling out to God, asking God to guide him if he was God's sheep, and said that I was willing to do all that I could in fellowshiping with him.

Later, Sister Anila and I invited Rafael to fellowship together. When he joined our meeting he was all worked up, spouting a whole bunch of religious doctrine, talking about his devotion to the Lord Jesus and how firm his faith was. He thought that since the Lord Jesus had incarnated as male and He called God in heaven "Father," and because those in the religious world are accustomed to calling God in heaven "God the Father," the Lord should return in the form of a man. Almighty God appearing and working in the form of a woman was unacceptable to him. Listening to the

intensity of his words, I wasn't sure how I should start communicating with him. I prayed to God for guidance. Then, I said to Rafael, "I believe that your faith in the Lord Jesus is really firm, but let's just think for a moment. We often pray to the Lord Jesus, but do we truly know Him? Do we truly know that the Lord Jesus is the incarnation of God Himself? Do we truly know that He is the truth, the way, and the life? Dare we say that we know the divine essence of the Lord Jesus? Dare we guarantee that when the Lord Jesus returns, we are truly able to know it is Him? Why exactly is it that we believe in Him? Is it because of His birth family or His appearance?" Rafael said nothing in response to this. I then read a few passages of Almighty God's word to him: **"The essence of people's belief in God is the belief in the Spirit of God, and even their belief in God incarnate is because this flesh is the embodiment of the Spirit of God, which means that such belief is still belief in the Spirit. There are differences between the Spirit and the flesh, but because this flesh comes from the Spirit, and is the Word become flesh, thus what man believes in is still the inherent essence of God"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Only Those Who Know God and His Work Can Satisfy God). **"Incarnation means that God's Spirit becomes a flesh, that is, God becomes flesh; the work that the flesh does is the work of the Spirit, which is realized in the flesh, expressed by the flesh. No one except God's flesh can fulfill the ministry of the incarnate God; that is, only God's incarnate flesh, this normal humanity—and no one else—can express the divine work"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. The Essence of the Flesh Inhabited by God). Having read God's word to him, I fellowshiped, "We all know that the Lord Jesus was born to a carpenter's family. He looked normal, no different from an ordinary man on the outside, but He was the body worn by the Spirit of God, and He was God Himself incarnate. It is not because He was Jewish that we believe in

Him, nor because He was born of Mary, and much less because of His sex or His appearance. We believe in Him because He has the essence of God's Spirit, because He is the truth, the way, and the life. Only He could express the truth and perform divine work. Likewise, why do we believe in Almighty God now? We believe because Almighty God is the Lord Jesus returned, He is the Spirit of the Lord Jesus clothed once again in the flesh of an ordinary person, living among us, expressing truths, and doing the work of judgment and cleansing in the last days. Almighty God and the Lord Jesus both have the same source, and both have the essence of God's Spirit. No matter what family this incarnation of God has been born into, what He looks like, what sex He is, none of these things can change His essence. Almighty God has expressed so many truths and does the work of judgment in the last days. This is enough to prove that Almighty God is the incarnation of God's Spirit and that He is the Lord Jesus returned."

Rafael gradually became willing to seek the truth. He said he agreed with everything I'd said, but still couldn't understand why God had chosen to incarnate in the form of a woman this time. Seeing that he had eased up a little, I asked him, "Are the form or sex that God chooses to take on to work in the flesh things that we can decide? When our mother gives birth to us, we aren't able to choose her appearance, and no matter what she looks like, we just have to accept it. This is the reason that children should have. Wouldn't you agree?" Rafael nodded and said, "Of course, we have no right to choose." I went on, "Likewise, is the sort of flesh that God has now chosen to incarnate in, as a man or a woman, something that we can decide? If we say that if God comes as a man I will accept it, but if He comes as a woman I will not, isn't that irrational? The sex of God's incarnation is a matter unto God Himself and it is God's choice. As humans, we are not qualified to comment, right? God is the Lord of creation. The wisdom of

God is higher than the heavens and His thoughts are higher than those of man. We are just insignificant humans; how can we fathom God's wisdom in His work? Regarding the appearance and work of God, we have absolutely no right to choose. God has become flesh, and so long as He expresses truths and does the work of God, no matter His sex, He is God Himself, and we should accept and submit. Only this is being rational, and only this is being an intelligent person." Rafael was listening in earnest and didn't refute me.

I then read a few Bible passages to him: **"In the beginning was the Word, and the Word was with God, and the Word was God"** (John 1:1). "And the earth was without form, and void; and darkness was on the face of the deep. And the Spirit of God moved on the face of the waters" (Genesis 1:2). "So God created man in His own image, in the image of God created He him; male and female created He them" (Genesis 1:27). "Take you therefore good heed to yourselves; for you saw no manner of similitude on the day that Jehovah spoke to you in Horeb out of the middle of the fire: Lest you corrupt yourselves, and make you a graven image, the similitude of any figure, the likeness of male or female, the likeness of any beast that is on the earth, the likeness of any winged fowl that flies in the air, the likeness of any thing that creeps on the ground, the likeness of any fish that is in the waters beneath the earth" (Deuteronomy 4:15–18). I fellowshipped, "From these passages of the Bible, we can see that God is spirit in essence, that He has no fixed form, and that He does not allow humans to carve Him into any image to worship. In Genesis it is written that in the beginning, God first created man, and then woman in His own image. So would you say God is male or female? You may say male, and yet God also created woman in His own image. You may say female, and yet God also created man in His own image. So, what's going on here? God is a righteous God, and He created

man and woman in His image. The first time He incarnated it was as a man, and in the last days He has incarnated as a woman, meaning He treats both sexes fairly. If God had incarnated as a man both times, that would be unfair to women. Saying that God is either male or female is delimiting God, which is what He hates most. Every time God incarnates it is to save humanity, and to incarnate means taking the form of a human, either male or female. However, regardless of the sex God incarnates as, His essence is eternally unchanging.” This seemed to get through to Rafael, and he truly agreed with what I said. Then I sent him a few passages of Almighty God’s word: **“Each stage of work done by God has its own practical significance. Back then, when Jesus came, He came in male form, and when God comes this time, His form is female. From this, you can see that God’s creation of both men and women can be of use in His work, and with Him there is no distinction of gender. When His Spirit comes, He can take on any flesh He pleases, and that flesh can represent Him; whether male or female, it can represent God as long as it is His incarnate flesh. If Jesus had appeared as a female when He came, in other words, if an infant girl, and not a boy, had been conceived by the Holy Spirit, that stage of work would have been completed all the same. If that had been the case, then the present stage of work would have to be completed by a male instead, but the work would be completed all the same. The work done in each stage has its significance; neither stage of work is repeated, nor does it conflict with the other”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. The Two Incarnations Complete the Significance of the Incarnation). **“If God came into the flesh only as a male, people would define Him as male, as the God of men, and would never believe Him to be the God of women. Men would then hold that God is of the same gender as men, that God is the head of men—but what then of women?**

**This is unfair; is it not preferential treatment? If this were the case, then all those whom God saved would be men like Him, and not one woman would be saved. When God created mankind, He created Adam and He created Eve. He did not only create Adam, but made both male and female in His image. God is not only the God of men—He is also the God of women”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. The Vision of God’s Work (3)). **“God is not merely the Holy Spirit, the Spirit, the sevenfold intensified Spirit, or the all-encompassing Spirit, but is also a human—an ordinary human, an exceptionally common human. He is not only male, but also female. They are similar in that They are both born to humans, and dissimilar in that one was conceived by the Holy Spirit and the other was born to a human, though derived directly from the Spirit. They are similar in that both incarnate flesh of God carry out the work of God the Father, and dissimilar in that one performed the work of redemption while the other does the work of conquest. Both represent God the Father, but one is the Redeemer, filled with lovingkindness and mercy, and the other is the God of righteousness, filled with wrath and judgment. One is the Supreme Commander who launched the work of redemption, while the other is the righteous God who accomplishes the work of conquest. One is the Beginning, the other the End. One is sinless flesh, while the other is flesh that completes the redemption, continues the work, and is never sinful. Both are the same Spirit, but They dwell in different flesh and were born in different places, and They are separated by several thousand years. However, all Their work is mutually complementary, never conflicting, and can be spoken of in the same breath. Both are people, but one was a baby boy and the other was an infant girl”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. What Is Your Understanding of God?). Having read God’s word, Anila

fellowshipped, “God’s work is always new and never old, and He never repeats His work. God’s work is always renewing, changing, and constantly elevating. If God were to do repeated work, then humans would be likely to delimit Him and we would not have true knowledge of Him. The first time God incarnated He was a man, so what would be the consequences of the Lord returning in the flesh as a man again? Humans would delimit God as male, and think God only recognizes men, favors men. They would think He doesn’t love women and shuns women, and so women would be discriminated against forever. Is that a correct understanding? Is this fair to women? Does this align with God’s intention? Are these things not just human notions and imaginings? God is righteous, and He treats men and women equally. God has incarnated once as a man and once as a woman. This is very meaningful! God incarnating as a woman in the last days has overturned everyone’s notions, reversed man’s fallacious understanding of God, broken man’s delimitations of God, and shown people that God is not just the God of men, but of women too. God is the God of all humanity. Nobody can use their notions to delimit God as male or female.”

After Anila was finished, I went on to add, “In fact, no matter the form God takes in His incarnations, His essence is unchanging. These forms are the Spirit of God become flesh. They represent God Himself, and are able to perform divine work. In the Age of Grace, God became flesh and was crucified as mankind’s sin offering. The Lord Jesus was a man and was able to be crucified to redeem humanity. If God had incarnated as a woman that first time, He still would have been able to complete the work of redemption, and express the truth to give humanity the path to repentance. Therefore, the sex and looks of God’s incarnation are not important, and whether He has the appearance of greatness is not important. What is important is that He has the essence of God, expresses the truth, and does



the work of saving humanity. These alone are what we should pay close attention to while investigating the true way.” I then read him another passage of God’s word: **“He who is God incarnate shall possess the essence of God, and He who is God incarnate shall possess the expression of God. Since God becomes flesh, He shall bring forth the work He intends to do, and since God becomes flesh, He shall express what He is, and shall be able to bring the truth to man, bestow life upon him, and point the way for him. Flesh that does not have the essence of God is decidedly not the incarnate God; of this there is no doubt. If man intends to inquire into whether it is God’s incarnate flesh, then he must corroborate this from the disposition He expresses and the words He speaks. Which is to say, to corroborate whether or not it is God’s incarnate flesh, and whether or not it is the true way, one must discriminate on the basis of His essence. And so, in determining whether it is the flesh of God incarnate, the key lies in His essence (His work, His utterances, His disposition, and many other aspects), rather than external appearance. If man scrutinizes only His external appearance, and as a result overlooks His essence, this shows that man is benighted and ignorant”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Preface). I continued by fellowshiping, “God’s word is very clear. To ascertain whether it is the incarnation of God, the main thing to look for is whether He can express the truth and do God’s work. If you do not focus on listening for the voice of God while investigating the true way, and instead judge based on the appearance and sex of an incarnation, are you not making the same mistake of the Pharisees resisting the Lord Jesus? The Pharisees saw that His family background and appearance were entirely out of line with their notions and delusions of the Messiah, so they judged and condemned the Lord Jesus without seeking or investigating His words or

work at all. In the end, they had Jesus crucified, offending God's disposition, and so they were punished and damned. If people don't read Almighty God's word or focus on listening for God's voice, and deny and resist Almighty God because a female incarnation of God doesn't align with their notions, is this not crucifying God all over again?"

After fellowshiping with Rafael, he said he would keep seeking the truth, and when we invited him to a gathering the following evening, he agreed readily. But, to my surprise, he didn't come the following evening and didn't answer when I called him on the phone. I was very worried. So, every morning when I woke up I would send him some of God's word, hoping that one day he would respond. But he never read my messages, and I was really losing hope. Later, I had other brothers and sisters try contacting him, but he just couldn't be reached. I fell into a state of hopelessness again, figuring that was the way it had to be. Just when I was about to give up on him completely, I stumbled across an article about a sister's experience preaching the gospel to an Italian. I happened to know this brother she had preached to, as he was currently partnered with me in spreading the gospel. This brother had good humanity and a pure understanding of the truth, so I never expected him to have so many notions while receiving the gospel, or for the sister to be unable to contact him for two months. Still, the sister didn't give up. She just kept waiting and finding chances to fellowship on God's word with him, until Almighty God's word eventually resolved his notions one by one, and he accepted God's work of the last days. The sister's experience really moved me, but also made me feel ashamed. God has done much work, paid a great price, and arranged many people, events, and things for everyone who comes before Him. If I understood God's thoughtful consideration in saving man, then I should have been considering His intentions. But at the slightest difficulty, I was

ready to shrink back and give up. I was completely lacking in perseverance. Where was my loyalty and testimony? Then I read God's word: **"In spreading the gospel, you must first fulfill your responsibility. You must follow your conscience and reason in doing all that you can and all that you ought. You must lovingly provide solutions to whatever notions the person investigating the true way may have or whatever questions they raise. If you really cannot provide a solution, you can find a few relevant passages of God's words to read to them, or relevant videos of experiential testimony, or some relevant gospel testimony films to show them. It is entirely possible that this will be effective; at the very least you will be fulfilling your responsibility, and won't feel accused by your conscience. But if you are perfunctory and muddle your way through, you are liable to delay things, and it will not be easy to win over that person. In spreading the gospel to others, one must fulfill their responsibility. How should the word 'responsibility' be understood? How, precisely, should it be put into practice and applied? Well, you should understand that having welcomed the Lord and experienced God's work in the last days, you have an obligation to bear witness for His work to those who thirst for His appearance. So, how are you to spread the gospel to them? Whether online or in real life, you should spread it in whatever way wins over people and is effective. Gospel-spreading is not something you do when you feel like it, something you do when you are in a good mood and do not do when you are not. Neither is it something done according to your preferences, with you deciding who receives preferential treatment, spreading the gospel to those you like and not spreading it to those you do not. The gospel should be spread according to God's demands and to the principles of His house. You should fulfill the responsibility and duty of a created**

being, doing all that you are capable of to testify to the truths you understand, to the words of God, and to the work of God to those investigating the true way. That is how you fulfill the responsibility and duty of a created being. What should a person do as they are spreading the gospel? They should fulfill their responsibility, do all they can, and be willing to pay every price” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Spreading the Gospel Is the Duty to Which All Believers Are Honor-Bound). **“So, how should someone who is investigating the true way be treated? As long as they conform to the principles of God’s house for spreading the gospel, we have an obligation to preach it to them; and even if their current attitude is poor and unaccepting, we must exercise patience. For how long and to what extent must we be patient? Until they reject you and do not let you into their house, and no discussion works, nor does calling them, or having someone else go invite them, and they do not acknowledge you. In this case, there is no way to spread the gospel to them. That is when you will have fulfilled your responsibility. That is what it means to perform your duty. However, so long as there is a bit of hope, you should think of every way you can and do your utmost to read God’s words and bear witness for His work to them. Say, for instance, you have been in contact with someone for two or three years. You have tried spreading the gospel and testifying for God to them many times, but they have no intention of accepting it. Yet their understanding is quite good, and they really are a potential gospel recipient. What should you do? First of all, you absolutely must not give up on them, instead you should maintain normal interactions with them, and keep reading God’s words to them and bearing witness for His work. Do not give up on them; be patient until the end. On some unknown day, they will wake up and feel it is time to investigate the**

**true way. That is why practicing patience and persevering to the end is a very important aspect of spreading the gospel. And why do this? Because it is the duty of a created being. Since you are in contact with them, you have an obligation and a responsibility to preach God's gospel to them. Many processes lie between them first hearing God's words and the gospel up until they turn themselves around, and this takes time. This period calls for you to be patient and wait, until that day comes when they turn themselves around and you bring them before God, back to His house. This is your obligation. What is an obligation? It is a responsibility that cannot be shirked, to which one is honor-bound. It is just like how a mother treats her child. No matter how disobedient or mischievous the child may be, or if they are sick and will not eat, what is the mother's obligation? Knowing that this is her child, she dotes on them, and loves them, and cares for them attentively. It makes no difference whether the child acknowledges her as their mother or not, and it does not matter how they treat her—she stays by their side all the same, protecting them, without leaving for an instant, constantly waiting for them to believe that she is their mother and for them to return to her embrace. In this way, she constantly watches over and cares for them. This is what responsibility means; this is what it means to be honor-bound. If those engaged in spreading the gospel would practice in this way, harboring this sort of loving heart for people, they would then be upholding the principles of spreading the gospel, and be entirely capable of achieving results”** (The

Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Spreading the Gospel Is the Duty to Which All Believers Are Honor-Bound). Having read God's word, I felt ashamed. God has made very clear the responsibilities that gospel workers are to perform. Every potential gospel recipient's situation is different and needs to be

treated differently. You cannot rely on your own notions, imaginings, or prejudices to shun and delimit them, much less give up on them rashly. If, according to the principles, you determine someone to be a suitable gospel recipient, then you must do your utmost and use any means to testify God's work in the last days to them and lead them before God. These are the principles one should have in spreading the gospel. However, after just a short while of not being able to contact Brother Rafael, I ran out of patience and compassion. I was going through a hard time and didn't want to keep trying to fellowship with him. I felt that with him ignoring us, not answering the phone, and not reading our messages, there was nothing else I could do. I had fellowshiped what I was supposed to, it was simply Rafael who wouldn't accept it. I couldn't invest any more effort, so I just put him aside for the time being. Still, I felt uneasy. I kept thinking that this brother had genuine faith, and a good caliber and capacity to understand the truth, but had been seized by religious notions due to the disturbance and misleading of a priest. I had to help him at this critical moment, I couldn't just stand by and do nothing. I had to fulfill the responsibilities of a gospel worker. So I sent him an experiential testimony article, hoping to help him. Regardless of whether he read it or not, I had to do everything that I could.

A few days later, he sent me a message saying, "I've been praying this whole time. Even though I haven't said anything, I know that God seeks out our hearts. My heart has been calling out for Almighty God to enlighten and guide me, lest I err and offend God." I was so moved. Then in his reply I saw him say, "This world is so corrupt and evil. It is so hard for people to grow close to God. The only weapons against evil are the word of Almighty God and the Bible." He acknowledged the word of Almighty God, and this proved that he could understand the voice of God and that there was hope of getting him back. But I knew that he was going through a fierce inner

battle, and I worried that he might stop reading my messages at any time. I was very anxious, so I calmed myself and prayed to God. While praying, I remembered a phrase from God's word: **"God would by no means abandon mankind lightly, or until the last possible moment."** Inspired, I hurried to read some passages of God's word: **"The following passage was recorded in the Book of Jonah 4:10–11: 'Then said Jehovah, You have had pity on the gourd, for the which you have not labored, neither made it grow; which came up in a night, and perished in a night: And should not I pity Nineveh, that great city, wherein are more than six score thousand persons that cannot discern between their right hand and their left hand; and also much cattle?'** These are the actual words of Jehovah God, recorded from a conversation between God and Jonah. Though this exchange is brief, it brims with the Creator's care for mankind and His reluctance to give mankind up" (The Word, Vol. 2. On Knowing God. God Himself, the Unique II). **"Although Jonah was entrusted with proclaiming Jehovah God's words to the people of Nineveh, he did not understand Jehovah God's intentions, nor did he understand His worries and expectations for the people of the city. With this reprimand, God meant to tell him that humanity was the product of God's own hands, and that He had expended painstaking effort on each and every single person, that each and every person carried God's expectations upon their shoulders, and that each and every person enjoyed the supply of God's life; for each and every person, God had paid the price of painstaking effort. This reprimand also told Jonah that God pitied humanity, which was the work of His own hands, just as much as Jonah himself had pity on the gourd. God would by no means abandon mankind lightly, or until the last possible moment, not least because there were so many children and innocent livestock inside**

**the city”** (The Word, Vol. 2. On Knowing God. God Himself, the Unique II). Having read God’s word, I was moved, so I said to Rafael, “Brother, you’re a thoughtful person who can understand the voice of God. God has incarnated in the last days and has expressed millions of words of truth to provide for us, save us from the bondage of sin, and purify us for entry into His kingdom. I hope that you can fully consider this matter concerning our fates and outcomes. I will be praying for you. May God open your heart and allow you to come back into His house soon.” I then sent him readings of three passages of God’s word. Among these, there was a passage of God’s word that got him to reflect, and brought him to a turning point. God’s words say: **“The return of Jesus is a great salvation for those who are capable of accepting the truth, but for those who are unable to accept the truth it is a sign of condemnation. You should choose your own path, and should not blaspheme against the Holy Spirit and reject the truth. You should not be an ignorant and arrogant person, but someone who submits to the guidance of the Holy Spirit and longs for and seeks the truth; only in this way will you benefit. I advise you to tread the path of belief in God with care. Do not jump to conclusions; what is more, do not be casual and thoughtless in your belief in God. You should know that, at the very least, those who believe in God should possess humble and God-fearing hearts. Those who have heard the truth and yet turn their nose up at it are foolish and ignorant. Those who have heard the truth and yet carelessly jump to conclusions or condemn it are beset by arrogance. No one who believes in Jesus is qualified to curse or condemn others. You should all be someone with sense and who accepts the truth. Perhaps, having heard the way of truth and having read the word of life, you believe that only one in 10,000 of these words are in line with your convictions and the Bible, and then you should continue**



**to seek in that 10,000th of these words. I still advise you to be humble, to not be over-confident, and to not exalt yourself too highly. With the bit of a God-fearing heart you possess, you will gain greater light. If you carefully examine and repeatedly contemplate these words, you shall understand whether or not they are the truth, and whether or not they are life. Perhaps, having only read a few sentences, some people will blindly condemn these words, saying, ‘This is nothing more than some enlightenment of the Holy Spirit,’ or, ‘This is a false christ come to mislead people.’ Those who say such things are blinded by ignorance! You understand too little of the work and wisdom of God, and I advise you to start again from scratch! You must not blindly condemn the words expressed by God because of the appearance of false christs during the last days, and you must not be someone who blasphemes against the Holy Spirit because you are afraid of being misled. Would that not be a great pity? If, after much examination, you still believe that these words are not the truth, are not the way, and are not the expression of God, then you shall ultimately be punished, and you shall be without blessings. If you cannot accept such truth spoken so plainly and so clearly, then are you not unfit for God’s salvation? Are you not someone who is not blessed enough to return before the throne of God? Think about it! Do not be rash and impetuous, and do not treat belief in God as a game. Think for the sake of your destination, for the sake of your prospects, for the sake of your life, and do not play yourself. Can you accept these words?”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. By the Time You Behold the Spiritual Body of Jesus, God Will Have Made Heaven and Earth Anew). That day, Rafael read this passage of God’s word and sent me a long message regarding his feelings and understanding of the passage. I could see that he was conflicted and worried that he would take

the wrong path, and that he feared believing in Almighty God meant following another denomination and betraying the Lord Jesus. I found a passage of God's word to send him, and fellowshiped, "The Church of Almighty God doesn't belong to any religious group. It came about because of the appearance and work of the returned Lord Jesus, not because somebody founded a new denomination. Almighty God expresses truths to do the work of judgment, ushering in the Age of Kingdom and bringing the Age of Grace to a close. Other than God incarnate Himself, there is no leader, or great or famous person in the world that can express truths, lead or save humanity. Though the work of Almighty God is different from that of the Lord Jesus or Jehovah, They are the same God in essence. Jehovah, Jesus, and Almighty God are just different names used by God in different ages. But no matter how God's name or work changes, His essence is unchanging. God is eternally God. God says: **'The work that Jesus did represented the name of Jesus, and it represented the Age of Grace; as for the work done by Jehovah, it represented Jehovah, and it represented the Age of Law. Their work was the work of one Spirit in two different ages. ... Although They were called by two different names, it was the same Spirit that accomplished both stages of work, and the work that was done was continuous. As the name was different, and the content of the work was different, the age was different. When Jehovah came, that was the age of Jehovah, and when Jesus came, that was the age of Jesus. And so, with each coming, God is called by one name, it represents one age, and He launches a new path; and on each new path, He assumes a new name, which shows that God is always new and never old, and that His work never ceases to progress in a forward direction. History is always moving forward, and the work of God is always moving forward. For His six-thousand-year management**

**plan to reach its end, it must keep progressing in a forward direction. Each day He must do new work, each year He must do new work; He must launch new paths, launch new eras, begin new and greater work, and along with these, bring new names and new work. ... From the work of Jehovah to that of Jesus, and from the work of Jesus to that of this current stage, these three stages cover in a continuous thread the entire gamut of God's management, and they are all the work of one Spirit. Since the creation of the world, God has always been at work managing mankind. He is the Beginning and the End, He is the First and the Last, and He is the One who begins an age and the One who brings the age to an end. The three stages of work, in different ages and different locations, are unmistakably the work of one Spirit. All those who separate these three stages stand in opposition to God. Now, it behooves you to understand that all the work from the first stage until today is the work of one God, the work of one Spirit. Of this there can be no doubt'** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. The Vision of God's Work (3)). The word of Almighty God is very clear. God's work of saving humanity is divided into three stages. The first stage was the work of the Age of Law, in which Jehovah issued laws to lead the Israelites to live on earth. The second stage was the work of redemption in the Age of Grace, and this was the first time that God incarnated to act as mankind's sin offering. The third stage of work is the work of judgment in the last days as prophesied in the book of Revelation. These three stages of work are God's complete management plan to save humanity. God does different work in each age, but the work of all three stages is done by a single God. I'll give a simple example. God's management work can be compared to the building of a house. The Age of Law represents the foundation of the house, as without a foundation, the house cannot be built at all. The Age of Grace

represents the structure of the house, as without a structure, the house cannot take form. The Age of Kingdom is like the roof. Without this final step the house remains incomplete and can't keep out the wind or rain. Therefore, each of these three steps is indispensable. Our belief in Almighty God doesn't mean that we've betrayed the Lord Jesus, much less that we believe in a different God. We are simply keeping pace with the footsteps of the Lamb. There are currently several major religions in the world, and believers in God have split into more than two thousand denominations. Regardless of their former denominations, more and more brothers and sisters with sincere faith and a thirst for God's appearance have come to accept the work of Almighty God in the last days, and have come to accept the watering and sustenance of His word. This fact is as plain as day. This also fulfills the biblical prophecy, 'That in the dispensation of the fullness of times He might gather together in one all things in Christ, both which are in heaven, and which are on earth; even in Him' (Ephesians 1:10). **'And it shall come to pass in the last days, that the mountain of Jehovah's house shall be established in the top of the mountains, and shall be exalted above the hills; and all nations shall flow to it'** (Isaiah 2:2)." After seeing what I had to say, Rafael sent a prayer emoji and said, "You're right, Almighty God is the one true God, we should all come under the name of Almighty God. Almighty God calls to me. He knows my heart, my worries, and my fears." I then sent him a few gospel movies and some of God's word. I also prayed to God, saying that whether or not Rafael came to gatherings in the end, I would do all that I could and learn to wait, seek, and submit.

Four days later, I received an unexpected message from him asking if he could keep attending gatherings. He also said that the word of Almighty God was very precious to him and that he couldn't be without it. From

God's word he understood many of the truths and mysteries of the Bible. God's word had drawn him in. At that moment, I was moved to tears. I really thank God! Later, he said that he had read the words of God that I had sent, and that the questions they posed made him feel very guilty. He said, "I can't be careless in my faith or treat it like a game, so I've decided to keep investigating the true way. The Lord's return is very important to me and I don't want to lose the chance to welcome Him. I don't want to ultimately offend or betray Him." I was so excited! I saw the authority and power of God's word. It was God's word that turned Rafael around and made him decide to accept Almighty God's work of the last days.

This experience really touched me and made me realize that no matter what kind of potential gospel recipient I encounter, as long as they can understand the voice of God, I should fulfill my duty and obligation in leading them into the house of God. Only by doing our duty in this way can we not leave behind debts and regrets. Thank God!

## 82. The Right Choice

By Shunyi, China

I was born in a remote mountain village into a family of several generations of farmers. When I was in school, my mother often exhorted me: “Our family has nothing to rely on. If you want to change your fate and make it in life, you only have yourself. Your only hope is to do well in school.” I took these words of hers to heart, truly hoping to one day stand out above the rest, and bring honor to my ancestors. But after graduating, not only couldn’t I find stable employment, but both my parents fell seriously ill. We spent all of our family savings and then borrowed money from relatives. I couldn’t pay them back in time, so my very own aunt even called me a bloodsucker behind my back. I threw myself into earning money so they wouldn’t keep looking down on me, but our destitute family conditions along with our relatives’ snubbing left me feeling depressed, and I cried in secret a lot. Just when I was feeling my absolute lowest, a friend shared Almighty God’s gospel of the last days with me. Through reading God’s words and gathering with my brothers and sisters, I learned that man was created by God, and our destinies are in His hands. I also learned that life is so painful because humans lost God’s protection after being corrupted by Satan. Now, in the last days, God has become flesh and is expressing the truth to save mankind from Satan’s corruption and harm. After learning about God’s intention to save humanity, I became highly engaged in gatherings and read God’s words as often as I could. Soon after, I started doing my duty in the church.

After a few months, seeing I was enthusiastic and wanted to pursue the truth, my brothers and sisters recommended that I train to be a group leader. I partnered with Brother Li Zheng, and together we were put in charge of

some gathering groups. I had a job at the time, so Li Zheng went to the daytime gatherings that were a bit farther away, and I went to the evening gatherings. That way, everything matched my schedule. Toward the end of the year we didn't have enough staff to handle general affairs, so Li Zheng was assigned to do that work and I was temporarily put in charge of those groups. I knew I needed to rely on God and do my part, but at the same time, I felt like I was in a tough spot. If I put all my time and energy into doing my duty, I wouldn't have enough time for my job. My company had set me a year-end sales goal of one million yuan, and if I exceeded that I could get a bigger year-end bonus. I thought: "If I meet this goal, not only could I repay my debts, but I could save a bit of money, and then my friends and relatives wouldn't look down on me. Maybe I should just get this money first, then focus on doing my duty." My supervisor wanted me to work overtime in the evenings to meet that target, so I'd work an extra hour or more at night and then take time off for gatherings, but soon my supervisor stopped letting me take time off, and wanted me to work more overtime. That often made me late for gatherings. My brothers and sisters reminded me that I needed to show up earlier, and I'd just reluctantly nod my head at them. Soon after that, I landed a big order for over 500,000 yuan and got paid over 7,000 yuan that month, which just fed my desire for even more money. I thought: "Wow, that was some quick money! I already made more than half of my year-end target with that order. If five of my ten clients sign off on other orders, I could make a huge lump of cash! And then if I get some more big clients, maybe I could even buy a house and a car in a few years! Then I could go back home in all that glory and the villagers would really look up to me." And so, I plunged myself headlong into my dream of making big money, often working overtime until late in the evening. Sometimes I thought about my brothers and sisters waiting for me

to show up at a gathering and I felt a little guilty, but it was too late by the time I got off work. I'd get home exhausted and go straight to sleep, not having the energy to read God's words. Some mornings I got up really late, so I'd just skim through God's words a bit and then go to work. I didn't know what to say to God when I prayed. Living in that sort of state, I got more and more perfunctory with my duty. Some of the newcomers I was responsible for urgently needed watering, but I just asked my other brothers and sisters to go to newcomer gatherings in my place. However, they all had their own duties and sometimes couldn't take on mine, as well. As a result, the effectiveness of the watering was impacted. Later, my brothers and sisters fellowshiped with me about needing to put my duty first, and reminded me that just going through the motions in gatherings and being irresponsible in my duty would hinder newcomers' life progress. Hearing that scared me. If new believers weren't watered in time, they could be misled by rumors and drop out, and then I'd be doing evil. I knew I couldn't keep on like that, so I prayed to God and promised to repent and change.

After that, I went to check on how my groups were doing. I saw that as a result of my not having done real work, newcomers' issues and difficulties weren't resolved in time, leaving them in a bad state. Some of them weren't even attending gatherings regularly. I felt incredibly guilty when I saw how things were. More and more new believers accepted God's work of the last days, who urgently needed watering and support. To help them better establish a foundation on the true way, I felt like I should quit my job and devote myself full time to my duty, but my boss had been giving me some good projects, and my supervisor said he'd help me find more clients. When I told my colleagues I was thinking about quitting, they said: "You're more than halfway toward your sales target, so you'll definitely pass it by the end of the year. It would be a shame to give up



now.” Hearing them say that, I also felt that it would be a shame and wanted to hold on till the end of the year, then resign. That said, the church was still shorthanded, so only focusing on making money at my own job, and not putting my heart into the church’s work, would be incredibly selfish. This was a real dilemma for me. I prayed to God, asking Him to enlighten and guide me.

Then one day, when I was listening to a hymn of God’s words titled **“Every Day You Live Now Is Crucial,”** I heard this: **“Right now, each day you live through is crucial, and it is of the utmost importance to your destination and your fate, so you must cherish everything you have today, and treasure each minute that passes. You must carve out as much time as you can to give yourselves the greatest gains so that you will not have lived this life in vain”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. To Whom Are You Loyal?). I also listened to **“Time Lost Will Never Come Again”**: **“Awaken, brothers! Awaken, sisters! My day will not be delayed; time is life, and to seize back time is to save life! The time is not far off! If you fail the college entrance examination, you can study and retake it as many times as you like. However, My day will brook no further delay. Remember! Remember! I urge you with these good words. The end of the world unfolds before your very eyes, and great disasters rapidly draw near. Which is more important: your life, or your sleep, your food and drink and clothing? The time has come for you to weigh these things”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Utterances of Christ in the Beginning, Chapter 30). These hymns of God’s words made an impression on me. God’s work of the last days is the conclusion of the era. God is determining each person’s outcome, separating them according to their kind. In the end, everyone will either be saved and kept, or will sink into ruin. That’s determined by how we pursue the truth now. This is the

critical moment that decides our outcome and our fate. Today, we are beset by one disaster after another—earthquakes, floods, and droughts occur at an ever-increasing rate. We don't know when God's work will come to its final end. I knew if I didn't make use of my time to properly pursue the truth, instead chasing money and an easy life like the nonbelievers, my chance to gain the truth and be saved would be ruined. I thought of Lot's wife. The angels guided her family out of the city and told them not to look back, but out of greed for her property and possessions, she did. Doing this turned her into a pillar of salt, a mark of shame. I was just like Lot's wife. I coveted wealth and pursued worldly pleasures, putting a hand to the plow and looking back. I was so foolish and blind! I thought of how I was drifting out in the world before, heavily in debt with no way out. God's salvation came upon me and carried me out of my suffering, giving me the chance to pursue truth and salvation. I'd reveled in God's love but didn't have the desire to repay it. I was derelict in my duty, irresponsible toward it. I was without a conscience. I couldn't stay stubbornly on the wrong path. Instead, I had to let go of my personal interests, pursue the truth, and do my duty properly.

After that, I started to wonder why I was never able to let go of work and money—what was the root cause? Then one day, I read some of God's words: **“Satan uses fame and gain to control man's thoughts, until all people can think of is fame and gain. They struggle for fame and gain, suffer hardships for fame and gain, endure humiliation for fame and gain, sacrifice everything they have for fame and gain, and they will make any judgment or decision for the sake of fame and gain. In this way, Satan binds people with invisible shackles, and they have neither the strength nor the courage to throw them off. They unknowingly bear these shackles and trudge ever onward with great difficulty. For the**

sake of this fame and gain, mankind shuns God and betrays Him and becomes increasingly wicked. In this way, therefore, one generation after another is destroyed in the midst of Satan's fame and gain" (The Word, Vol. 2. On Knowing God. God Himself, the Unique VI). **"Money makes the world go round' is a philosophy of Satan. It prevails among the whole of mankind, in every human society; you could say it is a trend. This is because it has been instilled in the heart of every single person, who at first did not accept this saying, but then gave it tacit acceptance when they came into contact with real life, and began to feel that these words were in fact true. Is this not a process of Satan corrupting man? Perhaps people do not understand this saying to the same degree, but everyone has different degrees of interpretation and acknowledgment of this saying based on things that have happened around them and on their own personal experiences. Is that not the case? Regardless of how much experience someone has with this saying, what is the negative effect that it can have on someone's heart? Something is revealed through the human disposition of the people in this world, including each and every one of you. What is it? It is the worship of money. Is it hard to remove this from someone's heart? It is very hard! It seems that Satan's corruption of man is deep indeed! Satan uses money to tempt people, and corrupts them into worshiping money and venerating material things. And how is this worship of money manifested in people? Do you feel that you could not survive in this world without any money, that even one day without money would be impossible? People's status is based on how much money they have, as is the respect they command. The backs of the poor are bent in shame, while the rich enjoy their high status. They stand tall and proud, speaking loudly and living arrogantly. What does this saying and trend**

**bring to people? Is it not true that many people make any sacrifice in the pursuit of money? Do many people not lose their dignity and integrity in the pursuit of more money? Do many people not lose the opportunity to perform their duty and follow God for the sake of money? Is losing the chance to gain the truth and be saved not the greatest of all losses for people? Is Satan not sinister to use this method and this saying to corrupt man to such a degree? Is this not a malicious trick?”** (The Word, Vol. 2. On Knowing God. God Himself, the Unique V). God’s words revealed to me the root of pursuing money and fame. Since I was little, I thought of satanic philosophies like “Money makes the world go round” and “Stand out above the rest, and bring honor to your ancestors” as words to live by. I thought that with money, people could speak with confidence and dignity, that they could stand tall, have high status, and be respected. I thought that was the only way to have a worthwhile and honorable life. Especially when my relatives gave me the cold shoulder, I worked more overtime to earn more money, hoping to one day be free from their stifling gaze. After gaining my faith, I knew I needed to attend more gatherings and do more of my duty to understand the truth and progress in life, but I still couldn’t let go of my pursuit of money and status. When there was a conflict between my duty and my job, I put earning money first, treating my duty lightly. When my work was going well and I was earning more money, that desire became even stronger. I was entirely focused on how to bag more clients and get more orders signed to receive a bigger paycheck, totally disregarding the church’s work. That meant some newcomers weren’t watered in time and nearly dropped out, and watering work was seriously delayed. Only then did I realize that living by these satanic philosophies was making me increasingly selfish and greedy—I was only thinking of my own interests. I was enjoying the watering and sustenance of

God's words, but was not repaying Him through my duty. I was entirely without reason or conscience! Satan uses money and status to seduce and corrupt people. It pulled my heart further and further from God, to the point that I was just going through the motions even in prayer and reading God's words. If that went on, I wouldn't gain the truth, and I would lose my chance at being saved by God.

Later on, I heard another hymn of God's words: **"Lose the Chance and You Will Regret It Forever."** It says: **"You should become mindful of God's burden, here and now; you should not wait for God to reveal His righteous disposition to all humanity before growing mindful of God's burden. Would it not be too late by then? Now is a good opportunity to be perfected by God. If you allow this chance to slip through your fingers, you will regret it for the rest of your life, just as Moses was unable to enter the good land of Canaan and regretted it for the rest of his life, dying with remorse. Once God has revealed His righteous disposition to all peoples, you will be filled with regret. Even if God does not chastise you, you will chastise yourself out of your own remorse. The best opportunity to attain perfection is the present; now is an extremely good time. If you do not earnestly seek to be perfected by God, once His work has concluded, it will be too late—you will have missed the opportunity. No matter how great your aspirations, if God is no longer performing work, then regardless of the effort you put in, you will never be able to attain perfection"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Be Considerate of God's Intentions in Order to Attain Perfection). I could feel God's expectations for us through His words. He hopes that we'll be able to treasure this precious time, to pursue the truth properly, do our duty well, and gain His salvation. This is a once-in-a-lifetime opportunity to pursue being perfected by God, and a critical time to do our duty. In doing our

duty, through the practice of seeking the truth to resolve various problems, we can learn more truths and progress in life faster. If I didn't seize this opportunity to train well, but kept running after money instead, I'd end up with nothing at the conclusion of God's work, and no amount of regret would be of any use. In fact, we should be content in life with food and clothing. If we neglect our duty in favor of big money, ultimately that will do harm to our life, and we'll lose the incredible chance to gain the truth and be perfected by God. That would be terribly foolish!

Later, I read another passage of God's words: **"As someone who is normal, and who pursues the love of God, entry into the kingdom to become one of the people of God is your true future, and a life that is of the utmost value and significance; no one is more blessed than you. Why do I say this? Because those who do not believe in God live for the flesh, and they live for Satan, but today you live for God, and live to follow the will of God. That is why I say your lives are of the utmost significance. Only this group of people, who have been selected by God, are able to live out a life of the utmost significance: No one else on earth is able to live out a life of such value and meaning"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Know God's Newest Work and Follow His Footsteps). Reading these words from God was encouraging for me. Pursuing the truth and getting to know God is the only way to have a truly meaningful life. Before, I'd always lived according to satanic philosophies, thinking that with money and status everyone would admire me and that would give my life meaning. But that was all wrong. Without faith, without gaining the truth as life, people can't truly understand anything. They don't even know where they themselves came from, or that God rules over the fates of mankind. They just plod after status and money, not thinking of turning back no matter how much they suffer. When the disasters come, people like this are

bound to perish—then their money will be useless. It's so sad to be toyed with and hurt by Satan for their entire life. Having faith and pursuing the truth, however, is different. We may not have as much material gratification, but by learning truths, we can see things a bit more clearly and will no longer be tempted and bound by money. We can gain peace and enlightenment. Job had so many family possessions, but that wasn't what he took pleasure in. He was focused on understanding God's rule in all things, and on fearing God and shunning evil. When trials came upon him, he never complained, and was able to stand firm in witness. He gained God's approval and in the end God appeared to him. Job's life had meaning and value. Thinking about it that way, I wrote my resignation letter. Seeing that I'd made up my mind, the boss didn't try to get me to stay. My resignation process was smooth. The moment I walked out of the company I felt relaxed and free.

After that, I threw myself into my duty and worked with my brothers and sisters watering newcomers. A little while later, the new believers were coming to gatherings enthusiastically, and church life was picking up. I had such a sense of peace! Thank God!

## 83. Lessons Learned Through a Failure

By Joanne, South Korea

While I was serving as a church leader, Wang Hua supervised my work. She often talked about how she managed the church's work, telling me that she wasn't simply in charge of the work in her own church, but that she also followed up on the work of several other churches, and that the upper leaders praised her for being wise, of good caliber and capable of the work. She said the reason she was successful in her work was mainly because she focused on her personal life entry. She also told me that during her school years, she'd enjoyed writing essays and had been a good writer—this meant her written correspondence with leaders and co-workers rarely required editing, and she could communicate complicated issues in clear prose. She said that God had endowed her with these skills, and now she was putting them to use. I was quite envious when she told me that, and admired her good caliber, impressive work performance, and seeking of the truth.

But after working with her for two months, I noticed that she would often stay at home instead of attending gatherings. I asked her: "Why don't you come to gatherings?" She replied: "I eat and drink of God's words and equip myself with the truth at home, so that I can better fellowship on God's words with others and resolve their issues." I thought to myself: "Now is the time to expand the gospel, and the gospel work is your main responsibility. Yet, at such a busy time, you're still sitting at home. Aren't you failing to do real work and greedily reveling in the perks of your status?" But then I thought: "She has such good caliber and has been a leader for such a long time. Even the upper leaders speak of her good caliber, wisdom, and work ability. Even if she does revel a little bit in the



perks of her status, so what? We all have corruption; it's perfectly normal to reveal it now and then. I should stop with these baseless assumptions." Just like that, I dropped the matter and didn't think about it anymore. During that time, a few co-workers and I were holding gatherings daily with each group to provide fellowship and resolve problems and difficulties in the gospel work. The more we fellowshiped, the more lucid we all became, and we found some paths of practice. We told Wang Hua about the results we'd achieved in the gatherings. To our surprise, however, she looked unimpressed—with a forced smile, she said: "You really shouldn't be focused on fellowshiping about gospel work, and resolving these minor details. That's work for those who are spreading the gospel—it's just child's play. In gatherings, you should focus on fellowshiping about how to seek the truth, and how to seek life entry. Then, success in gospel work will come naturally." Hearing what she said, I didn't dare adhere to my own opinion. I felt conflicted and was at a loss—if I didn't do as she said and a deviation affected the gospel work, the brothers and sisters would say it was my fault. Disrupting and obstructing the gospel work is an evildoing. Being replaced would be a light punishment; in a more serious case, I could be expelled. "Forget it," I thought, "I'll just do as she says!"

The next day, during a gathering, the others brought up some real problems and difficulties they'd encountered while spreading the gospel. This time, however, I didn't help analyze their problems and seek ways to resolve them according to the actual situations they faced. Instead, I just avoided these difficulties and problems, and asked them what they had learned about themselves through facing these matters. I also said that only by focusing on our own life entry can we achieve results in our duties. Hearing this, the brothers and sisters just looked around at each other, helpless. No one said a word. Gatherings proceeded in that way for the next

few days. The more I fellowshiped in this way, the more tired I became. My fellowship was dull and boring, I didn't have much to say, and lacked direction in leading the gatherings. I felt truly awful. It seemed gathering like this was fruitless—it wasn't resolving their problems. My co-workers also felt the same way. We sought out Wang Hua to fellowship with her, and asked her if we were in error to be working like that. But Wang Hua insisted that we needn't resolve real problems—so long as we fellowshiped on life entry, the gospel work would be effective. She also said that we were inexperienced and lacked insight, only focused on our work, and failed to seek the truth. After she said that, I was again at a loss as to how to proceed. I thought: “She has good caliber, supervises many different projects, and the upper leaders think highly of her, so I should just do as she says! After all, I have poor caliber, lack experience and insight, and I'm her inferior in every aspect.” So, ultimately, I kept going by her orders.

During that time, other churches were improving their results in spreading the gospel, and their numbers of new believers were increasing exponentially. Our church's results, however, were actually getting worse. I felt absolutely terrible and had no idea how to proceed. Just at that time, a co-worker gathering was held, and when the leaders from the other churches heard why our church hadn't achieved good outcomes in spreading the gospel, they criticized Wang Hua for reveling in the perks of her position and not doing real work. Rejecting this, she cried and attempted to defend herself. She said that it wasn't only her fault that results of the gospel work had been poor—that other co-workers were also to blame. We tried to fellowship with her and let her reflect on herself, but she just wasn't having it. She went on crying and making a fuss, and completely disrupted the gathering. Seeing that unfold, I thought to myself: “We fellowshiped to resolve the problems of the gospel work, but you kept

obstructing us and saying we needed to focus on life entry. You neglected to resolve real difficulties and problems in the gospel work, claiming that we should ‘focus on life entry.’ Is that not what you did? The facts of the matter are plain to see—instead of acknowledging what you’ve done, you’ve tried to pass the buck. Are you not failing to accept the truth?” I planned to inform the upper leaders about her situation and let them judge whether she was a right person. But then it occurred to me that maybe she’d just been in a bad state recently. Being pruned on top of that must have been a direct affront to her dignity and status. This was why she’d had such a big reaction. If she had just fallen into a bad state, and I reported her situation to the upper leaders, would they think I lacked truth and discernment, and was unable to treat people fairly? And if Wang Hua found out, would she think I was intentionally making things difficult for her? Would she isolate me and give me a hard time? Would she try to replace me because of this? I guessed I should just fellowship with her first and go from there. Once we’d fellowshiped and I had proper discernment of her, I could still report her if need be.

On the second day of the co-worker gathering, I happened to hear Wang Hua passing judgment on one sister in front of another, stirring up controversy between the two of them. I reminded her: “These two sisters already were having some misunderstandings, and you talking like that is just going to fan the flames. How are they supposed to keep collaborating after that?” She wouldn’t accept that, and quibbled with me: “Everything I said was true, I’m a straight shooter, I call it like I see it, and say what’s on my mind.” I said: “That’s not calling it like you see it. The way you described that sister’s behavior wasn’t factual or objective—you were passing judgment. You didn’t consider how what you said might harm that sister, or what effect it might have on the church’s work. All that can result

from this is that their relationship will deteriorate, and they'll be unable to collaborate properly. That's called sowing discord." To my surprise, she responded: "I'm not like some people that don't say what they think, that always equivocate, aren't transparent in their actions, and are deceitful." Hearing the innuendo and aggression in her words, I knew her problem was severe, and wanted to report her to the leadership. But then I thought, "All I did today was give her some suggestions and she attacked me right away. If she finds out I've reported her issues, will she fly into a rage, and seek revenge? She's already said I'm deceitful—what if she condemns me and says I'm not a good fit for church leader, and has me replaced? The CCP police are still pursuing me, so I can't return home. If I'm replaced, yet still can't return to gatherings back home, where else can I go?" That night, I felt truly awful. My thoughts were running rampant, and I didn't get a wink of sleep all night. Ultimately, I decided not to report her. Then, the next morning, I banged my head on the bedpost of my bunk bed so hard that I felt dizzy and dazed. I had two big lumps that didn't go away for several days. I thought to myself: "Is God disciplining me?" But at the time, I was numb, and didn't reflect on myself. During those couple of days, I went around like a zombie, and felt like I'd lost the work of the Holy Spirit.

To my surprise, directly after the co-worker gathering, some brothers and sisters sent by the upper leaders came to investigate Wang Hua's situation. I told them everything I knew. The brothers and sisters pruned me severely: "You clearly knew there was a problem, so why didn't you report what you saw? Even if you couldn't grasp the substance of the issue, you could at least have reported what you'd seen, what you knew, and the specific details of her behavior to the upper leaders. You knew that you should report her problems, but to protect yourself, you didn't practice the truth and didn't safeguard the work of the church in the slightest. You are

truly selfish and despicable!” I felt truly repentant and regretful after being pruned like that. I prayed to God: “Oh God! I know that I didn’t safeguard the work of the church, but I don’t know the source of my problem. Please enlighten and guide me to know myself. I am willing to repent.”

After that, I came across this passage of God’s words: **“In their work, church leaders and workers must pay attention to two principles: One is to do their work exactly according to the principles stipulated by the work arrangements, never violating those principles and not basing their work on anything that they might imagine or on any of their own ideas. In everything they do, they should show concern for the work of the church, and always put the interests of God’s house first. Another thing—and this is most crucial—is that in all things, they must focus on following the Holy Spirit’s guidance and do everything in strict keeping with God’s words. If they are still capable of going against the Holy Spirit’s guidance, or if they stubbornly follow their own ideas and do things according to their own imagination, then their actions will constitute a most serious resistance against God. Frequently turning their back on the enlightenment and guidance of the Holy Spirit will only lead to a dead end. If they lose the work of the Holy Spirit, then they will not be able to work; and even if they do somehow manage to work, they will accomplish nothing”** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Part Three). Pondering God’s words, I realized what God demands of leaders and workers in their work is that they work precisely according to work arrangements, and perform their duties in accordance with the principles of God’s house. If they go their own way, violating principles as well as the guidance of the Holy Spirit, and stubbornly sticking to their own ideas in their work, this constitutes severe resistance to God. It was only then that I realized why I had lost the work of the Holy Spirit and had sunk

into darkness. I'd seen that Wang Hua wasn't attending gatherings or fellowshipping on gospel work. Further, I'd known that this was in violation of the work arrangements, and I also knew that doing as she said clearly wasn't working. But because I believed she had good caliber and was a capable worker, I went along with her in violating the work arrangements, and the gospel work suffered greatly as a result. I saw that Wang Hua wouldn't reflect on herself no matter how many times she was in the wrong, that she would even turn the tables and attack others and wouldn't accept the truth at all. But because I was scared of offending her and being replaced, I didn't report her problem. I violated work arrangements and the guidance and illumination of the Holy Spirit, and I was stubbornly resisting God. How could God not detest me? I hadn't gained enlightenment from God's words, didn't have anything to say in my fellowship, failed to find a path in my duties, and had sunk into utter darkness. This was God hiding His face from me.

Reflecting on all this, I came across this passage of God's words: **"A confusion is when you cannot see through some matter; you do not know how to judge or discern in a way that conforms to principles or is accurate. Even if you can somewhat see through it, you're unsure whether your view is correct, you do not know how to handle or resolve the matter, and it's difficult for you to reach a conclusion about it. In short, you're uncertain about it and unable to make a decision. If you don't understand even a bit of the truth and no one else resolves the problem, then it becomes unsolvable. Isn't this facing a tough challenge? When faced with such problems, leaders and workers should report them to the Above and seek from the Above so as to resolve the issues more quickly. Do you frequently face confusions? (Yes.) Regularly facing confusions is itself a problem. Let's say you're**

**faced with an issue and you don't know the appropriate way to handle it. Someone proposes a solution that you think is reasonable while another person proposes a different one that you also think is reasonable, and if you can't clearly see which solution is more appropriate, with everyone's opinions varying and no one grasping the problem's root cause or essence, then slip-ups are bound to appear in the resolution of the problem. Thus, to resolve a problem, it is crucial and important to determine its root cause and essence. If leaders and workers are not discerning, fail to grasp the essence of the problem, and cannot reach the correct conclusion, they must promptly report the issue to the Above and seek a solution from them; this is necessary and not an overreaction. Unresolved problems can lead to severe consequences and impact the church's work—this must be thoroughly understood”** (The Word, Vol. 5. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers (7)). Through reading God's words, I realized that when we encounter problems in our duties, like conflicts between co-workers that we don't know how to resolve, or if we've noticed a problem with someone but can't fully ascertain the situation and don't know how to deal with it, we should report to the upper leaders in a timely manner and seek resolution. Reporting issues is not about picking out faults in people, or telling on people, and it's not making a mountain out of a molehill; the point is to resolve issues that people can't grasp themselves, so as to prevent delays in the work and in people's life entry. As for me, no matter how many problems I faced or how serious they were, I preferred to delay the work and damage my brothers' and sisters' life entry than report them, if doing so threatened my interests or my future prospects. When I saw Wang Hua going against work arrangements and failing to supervise gospel work, even though I hadn't fully grasped the issue, I felt something was off and

that she was out of line. It was then that I should have reported her situation promptly to the upper leaders. Yet I worried that if I didn't go along with her orders, I'd be held responsible, so I did as she said. When Wang Hua kicked up such an unreasonable fuss after being pruned, I hadn't been sure if she was just in a bad state, or if she was someone who rejected and hated the truth in her very essence. Yet I could have made a timely report, and let the upper leaders send someone to investigate and discern, to avoid delaying the work of the church because the wrong person had been used. But I worried that if I reported her wrongly, the upper leaders would think I had poor judgment of others. Likewise, I feared that Wang Hua would suppress me afterward, so I kept putting off reporting her issue. If I were someone responsible, someone who safeguarded the church's work, then no matter whether or not I grasped the essence of the issue and understood the truth, I wouldn't have been constrained by anything. I would have found a way to safeguard the church's interests. But instead, in order to protect myself, I stood by passively, excusing myself by saying I'd report her once I had proper discernment. But if I waited until I had proper discernment, wouldn't it be too late? Wouldn't the gospel work be even more adversely affected then? It was then that I realized how important it is to seek the truth when we face difficulties and are confused. Being committed to safeguarding the work of the church is truly important!

To protect myself, I kept putting off reporting Wang Hua's issues, and this did a lot of serious damage to the gospel work. I felt incredibly regretful. Later, I came across God's words exposing antichrists: **"How does the selfishness and vileness of the antichrists manifest itself? In anything that benefits their status or reputation, they make efforts to do or say whatever is necessary, and they willingly endure any suffering. But where work arranged by God's house is concerned, or**



where work that benefits the life growth of God's chosen people is concerned, they utterly ignore it. Even when evil people disrupt, disturb, and commit all kinds of evil, thereby seriously affecting the work of the church, they remain impassive and unconcerned, as if this has nothing to do with them. And if someone discovers and reports the evil deeds of an evil person, they say they saw nothing and feign **ignorance**" (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Excursus Four: Summarizing the Character of Antichrists and Their Disposition Essence (Part One)). **"Some people do not understand many truths. They do not understand the principles in anything they do, and when they encounter problems, they do not know the proper way to handle them. How should they practice in this situation? The lowest standard is to act according to conscience—this is the baseline. How should you act according to conscience? Act from sincerity, and be worthy of God's kindness, of God having given you this life, and of this God-given opportunity to attain salvation. Is that the effect of your conscience? Once you have met this bare minimum of standards, you will have obtained protection and you will not commit grievous errors. You will not then so easily do things to rebel against God or shirk your responsibilities, nor will you be so liable to act in a perfunctory manner. You will also not be so prone to scheming for your own status, fame, gain, and future. This is the role that conscience plays. Conscience and reason should both be components of a person's humanity. These are both the most fundamental and most important. What kind of person is one who lacks conscience and does not have the reason of normal humanity? Generally speaking, they are a person who lacks humanity, a person of extremely poor humanity. Going into more detail, what manifestations of lost humanity does this person exhibit? Have a go at analyzing what characteristics are found in such people**

**and what specific manifestations they present. (They are selfish and base.) Selfish and base people are perfunctory in their actions and stand aloof from anything that does not concern them personally. They do not consider the interests of God's house, nor do they show consideration for God's intentions. They take on no burden of performing their duties or testifying for God, and they have no sense of responsibility. ... There are some people who do not take any responsibility regardless of the duty they are performing. They don't promptly report problems they discover to their superiors, either. When they see people being disruptive and disturbing, they turn a blind eye. When they see evil people committing evil, they don't try to stop them. They don't protect the interests of the house of God, or consider what their duty and responsibility is. When they perform their duty, people like this don't do any real work; they are people pleasers and are greedy for comfort; they speak and act only for their own vanity, face, status, and interests, and are only willing to devote their time and effort to things that benefit them"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. In Giving One's Heart to God, One Can Obtain the Truth). Through reading God's words, I realized that in our duties, we will often face issues we don't fully grasp and don't know how to resolve, but those with humanity safeguard the interests of the church in good conscience. Those without conscience and reason consider only their own dignity, status and self-interest. They don't report problems they observe, and are incredibly selfish and despicable. That was exactly how I was. For the sake of my reputation, status, future prospects, and destination, I had put off reporting Wang Hua's disruption of the church's work. I was living by satanic poisons like "Sensible people are good at self-protection, seeking only to avoid making mistakes" and "When you know something is wrong, it is better to

say less.” I was afraid that if I reported Wang Hua’s issues, I’d be suppressed or replaced, so I came up with excuses like, “Everyone is corrupt anyway,” “Perhaps she’s just in a bad state,” and “I’ll report the problem once I have a better grasp.” These excuses might have sounded right, but in reality, I was just trying to protect myself and shirk responsibility. I only cared about my reputation, status, future prospects, and destination—I hadn’t considered the work of the church, nor had I safeguarded its interests. I had been selfish, despicable, and inhumane. I really was biting the hand that fed me!

Later on, I reflected on why I kept putting off reporting Wang Hua’s problems and realized one of the reasons was that I lacked discernment of her. Through the exposition of God’s words, I gained discernment and understanding of Wang Hua’s behavior. God says: **“Their method of exalting and testifying about themselves is to flaunt themselves and belittle others. They also camouflage and package themselves, hiding their weaknesses, shortcomings, and deficiencies from people so that they only ever see their brilliance. They do not even dare to tell other people when they feel negative; they lack the courage to open up and fellowship with them, and when they do something wrong, they do their utmost to conceal it and cover it up. Never do they mention the harm they have caused to the work of the church in the course of doing their duty. When they have made some minor contribution or achieved some small success, however, they are quick to show it off. They cannot wait to let the whole world know how capable they are, how high their caliber is, how exceptional they are, and how much better they are than normal people. Is this not a way of exalting and testifying about themselves? Is exalting and testifying about oneself something someone with conscience and reason does? It is not. So when people do this,**

**what disposition is usually revealed? Arrogance. This is one of the chief dispositions revealed, followed by deceitfulness, which involves doing everything possible to make other people hold them in high esteem. Their words are completely watertight and clearly contain motivations and schemes, they are showing themselves off, yet they want to hide this fact. The outcome of what they say is that people are made to feel that they are better than others, that no one is their equal, that everyone else is inferior to them. And is this outcome not achieved via underhanded means? What disposition is behind such means? And are there any elements of wickedness? (There are.) This is a kind of wicked disposition. It can be seen that these means they employ are directed by a deceitful disposition—so why do I say it is wicked? What connection does this have to wickedness? What do you think: Can they be open about their aims in exalting and testifying about themselves? They can't. But there is always a desire in the depths of their hearts, and what they say and do is in aid of that desire, and the aims and motivations of what they say and do are kept very secret. They will, for example, employ misdirection or some shady tactics to achieve these aims. Is such secretiveness not devious in nature? Can such deviousness not be called wicked? (Yes.) It can indeed be called wicked, and it runs deeper than deceitfulness. They use a certain way or method to achieve their goals. This disposition is deceitfulness. However, the ambition and desire deep in their hearts of always wanting to have people follow, look up to, and worship them frequently directs them to exalt and testify about themselves, and to unscrupulously and shamelessly do these things. What is this disposition? This rises to the level of wickedness"**

**(The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Four: They Exalt and Testify About Themselves).**

**Through God's words I saw how antichrists have an arrogant and evil**

disposition. To accomplish their goal of ensnaring and controlling people, they use all kinds of methods to exalt and testify to themselves, making people unwittingly admire and worship them and feel that no one else can compare to them. God's words allowed me to gain some discernment of Wang Hua's methods and intentions. Thinking back on my interactions with her, she would often brag about how she managed the work and about the praise she received from the upper leaders. All of this served to make others feel she placed great importance on life entry and was someone who sought the truth. She would also show off her gifts and talents, claiming that she wrote letters with elegant and flowing prose that rarely needed editing. This made others feel inferior to her in all aspects, that they couldn't compare with her. Wang Hua used all kinds of methods to show off and brag about herself, but never exposed her own corruption. She would even stand the facts on their heads and whitewash herself, packaging herself up completely, so that no one could see her weaknesses, deficiencies or her sly intentions. In fact, the upper leaders had exposed and pruned her many times for not selecting or using people according to principle, and acting recklessly in her duties, but she never brought that up. She only ever talked about how the upper leaders praised and thought highly of her, and only showed people the most presentable aspects of herself. She often stayed at home rather than doing real work. This, she would claim, was to equip herself with truth, in order to better fellowship God's words and resolve people's problems. But in fact, she was clearly just reveling in the perks of her status. She didn't resolve any actual difficulties existing in the gospel work—instead, she spread the fallacy that by resolving issues in gospel work during gatherings, people were only placing importance on work and not on life entry. She also always attacked and disparaged others, characterizing other people's real work as child's play. She had sown

discord, secretly undermined others, and destroyed relationships between brothers and sisters, yet she claimed she was a straight shooter, speaking bluntly and truthfully. All of Wang Hua's words and actions were incredibly sinister and cunning. If it weren't for God's exposition, it would be easy to be misled into admiring and adoring her. Having realized all this, I finally came to my senses, and gained some discernment of Wang Hua's antichrist essence.

As I reflected, I realized that one of the reasons I had lacked discernment of her was because I couldn't distinguish between an isolated instance of corruption and a corrupt nature essence. Later, I found some of God's words: **"All who have been corrupted by Satan have corrupt dispositions. Some have nothing more than corrupt dispositions, while others are different: Not only do they have corrupt satanic dispositions, but their nature is also extremely malicious. Not only do their words and actions reveal their corrupt, satanic dispositions; these people are, moreover, the genuine devils and Satans"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. A Warning to Those Who Do Not Practice the Truth). **"How does God characterize antichrists? As those who hate the truth and oppose God—they are God's enemies! Opposing the truth, hating God, and hating all positive things—this is not the momentary weakness or foolishness found in ordinary people, nor is it the revelation of incorrect thoughts and viewpoints that arise from a moment's distorted comprehension; this is not the problem. The problem is that they are antichrists, the enemies of God, hating all positive things and all truth; they are characters who hate and oppose God. How does God view such characters? God does not save them! These people despise and hate the truth, they have the nature essence of antichrists. Do you understand this? What is being exposed here is wickedness, viciousness, and hatred**

**of the truth. It's the most severe of satanic dispositions among corrupt dispositions, representing Satan's most typical and substantial characteristics, not the corrupt dispositions revealed by ordinary corrupted mankind. Antichrists are a force inimical to God. They can disturb and control the church, and they have the capacity to dismantle and disrupt God's management work. This is not something that ordinary people with corrupt dispositions can do; only antichrists are capable of such actions. Do not underestimate this matter"** (The Word, Vol.

4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Six). God's words helped me understand that while all who have been corrupted by Satan have a corrupt disposition, some people have humanity, conscience and reason, and can accept the truth. If there are deficiencies or deviations in their duty, and they are notified of them, exposed, and pruned, they may at first feel ashamed and resistant, and defend themselves. Yet afterward, they are able to reflect on themselves, and come to despise their corrupt nature and flawed methods. When they realize how they have delayed and obstructed the church's work, they feel regretful, hate themselves, repent and achieve transformation. Yet there are some that not only have Satan's corrupt disposition, but also have a malicious nature, can't accept the truth in the least, and even despise it. No matter how much evil they do, or how great the harm they cause to the church's work, they don't suffer in the slightest and don't reflect on themselves at all. They don't have even an ounce of guilt. No matter how much they are pruned or exposed or dissected, they never acknowledge their wrongs, and never accept the plain facts as they're revealed. They despise being pruned, judged and chastised. Based on their attitudes toward the truth and toward positive things, they are clearly hostile to God—they are His sworn enemies. This is exactly how Wang Hua behaved. She didn't do real work, she was arrogant, and she upheld her own beliefs to the

obstruction of gospel work. When other leaders exposed and pruned her, she not only didn't accept what they said, she kicked up a fuss and tried to pass the blame, disrupting the whole gathering. When I warned her that she was judging others and sowing discord between two sisters, not only did she not accept this, she turned the tables, attacking and condemning me. She was always talking about focusing on life entry, making people think she was really seeking the truth. In reality, however, she was particularly disgusted by and opposed to God's requirements, as well as the work arrangements of God's house. She didn't submit at all when she was exposed and pruned—she was even offended and repulsed. No matter how many mistakes she made, or how much she harmed the church's work, she never acknowledged it, didn't feel regretful or indebted and completely lacked conscience. She only looked after her own interests—if you said anything that threatened her status, she'd get angry and make unfounded countercharges. She didn't accept the truth or positive things at all, and she would treat anyone that tried to fellowship with or correct her as an enemy. She would attack anyone that tried to expose her. Given that she truly hated the truth, despised those who practiced truth, and hated those that exposed her out of a sense of justice, was she not taking God as her enemy? It's just like God's words say: **“This is not the momentary weakness or foolishness found in ordinary people, nor is it the revelation of incorrect thoughts and viewpoints that arise from a moment's distorted comprehension; this is not the problem. The problem is that they are antichrists, the enemies of God, hating all positive things and all truth; they are characters who hate and oppose God”** (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Six). After Wang Hua was replaced, she couldn't accept it, and didn't acknowledge her evildoing whatsoever. She even said, “I do things before God and don't care what others think.” She really didn't seem



regretful or self-reflective at all. Her nature was malicious and truth-hating—wasn't she just a classic antichrist? People like this will only destroy and disturb the church's work.

Later on, a majority of brothers and sisters voted to expel Wang Hua from the church. After replacing her, we fellowshiped to resolve the actual problems in the gospel work, and the results of the work noticeably improved. At that time, I felt even more indebted, and I hated myself for being so selfish and despicable, only looking out for myself, not safeguarding the church's work, and indulging the evil deeds of an antichrist who had disrupted and disturbed the church's gospel work. I swore to myself that, in the future, whenever I observed someone disrupting and disturbing the church's work, I would practice the truth and safeguard the church's work. No matter how high their status, no matter how much work they'd done, or how convincingly they spoke doctrine, as long as they disrupted and disturbed the church's work, I would stand by the truth principles. Even if others called me arrogant or condemned me as an evildoer or antichrist, I would safeguard the church's work. Even if I didn't quite grasp the situation, I would report what I had seen faithfully to the upper leaders. I prayed to God, and said if I didn't safeguard the church's work upon finding a problem, I was willing to be punished and disciplined by God.

A few months later, some people reported that a leader named Li Na from another church wasn't doing real work, had failed to replace false leaders and workers, and had even promoted evildoers. These people hadn't been working according to principle, and the church's finances had been damaged as a result. Li Na was particularly given to showing off and disparaging others and the brothers and sisters all admired and worshiped her. Her co-workers had fellowshiped with her and pointed out this

problem many times, but she wouldn't accept what they said. On top of that, she also judged the upper leaders, which led her co-workers to develop biases toward them. When the upper leaders sent someone to help carry out the work, she ostracized them. She not only didn't cooperate, but passed judgment and undermined them—she said the person the leaders sent couldn't resolve problems, meaning the work didn't get done. After hearing all this, I realized that this person might very well be an antichrist, so I talked with my co-workers about replacing her quickly. But when I learned that Li Na was my partner's younger sister, I hesitated. If I replaced Li Na, what would my partner think of me? Would she say I had it out for Li Na? I went back and forth in my head; I felt increasingly conflicted and didn't know what to do. It was then that I realized my state and intentions were incorrect—I was trying to protect my own interests again. I remembered how last time, because I'd been too concerned about protecting myself, I hadn't exposed the antichrist in time, and had severely harmed the church's work—a transgression that I could never make right. I couldn't protect my own interests again. I had to practice the truth and safeguard the work of the church. No matter what others thought of me, satisfying God's intentions was paramount. So my co-workers and I dismissed Li Na according to principle. Later on, investigations revealed that Li Na had continually exalted herself and shown off in order to mislead and ensnare others, to control the church, and to establish an independent kingdom. She was an antichrist. The majority of people in the church voted to have her expelled. I experienced how rebelling against my flesh, practicing the truth and acting according to principle brought me peace, contentedness, and joy. I also realized that only by practicing the truth can one bear testimony and shame Satan. Thank God for His guidance!

## 84. Finding Your Place Is Key

By Zhou Yuqi, China

I did general affairs work in the church. Once, during a chat, I heard a church leader say, “Sister Zhen Xin has good caliber, a pure understanding of things, and fellowships practically on the truth. I’m planning to cultivate her for watering work.” Zhen Xin was elected as a leader not long after that. After hearing this news, my heart couldn’t help but sink. In the past, Zhen Xin and I both did general affairs work, but now, she’d become a leader, while I was still doing general affairs work. How could I be so lacking? I felt really down that whole morning and couldn’t focus on work. Later, the leader asked if I wanted to take over general affairs work from Zhen Xin. I was kind of upset. Although I’d gain the title of supervisor, it was still just general affairs work. No matter how well I did, no one would know, unlike being a leader, someone the church focuses on cultivating, and that the brothers and sisters all look up to and support. I felt that general affairs work was on a lower rung, so I didn’t really want to accept it. I worried about what the brothers and sisters would think of me if I took it on. Would they think I’d been doing general affairs work the whole time because over years of faith, I’d never pursued the truth or made progress? That would be so embarrassing! But on second thought, that duty came to me with God’s permission. Even if it wasn’t in line with my desires, I had to submit and not act based on personal preference, so I reluctantly replied to my leader that I was willing to accept that duty.

A little while later, I heard the leader say, “Brother Shang Jin has good caliber, and with a little more effort into his life entry, he can be a leader or worker. Put more effort into cultivating him.” Hearing this made me feel even worse. I supervised Shang Jin’s work, and even he was someone the

leader wanted to cultivate. Why hadn't anyone mentioned my name? I supervised his work, but I hadn't been promoted—I was at a standstill. How would the others see me? Was I really that deficient? I had some ability to manage work, find out and solve problems. Sometimes, when the leader discussed things, I was able to express some opinions and make suggestions. Why couldn't the leader see my strengths? If the leader just mentioned my name, said I could be cultivated, but I was needed to supervise general affairs work, that would prove I wasn't that bad, and I'd feel better. For a few days, I got so upset whenever I thought about it. I felt completely listless, I didn't want to talk to my brothers and sisters, and I didn't bear a burden for my duty. When others reported problems to me, I didn't give them careful thought like before.

One day, the leader asked me to deliver something to one of Zhen Xin's group gatherings. I really didn't want to go, afraid of what Zhen Xin would think of me. We did the same duty before, but now, she'd become a leader, while I was still doing general affairs work. Would she look down on me and think I was useless? But I worried it would hold up the work if I didn't go, so I had to bite the bullet. When I got there, to keep Zhen Xin from recognizing me, I sat hunched over on the living room sofa, and buried my head in my phone for over half an hour. Some brothers and sisters talked to me, but I didn't dare raise my head out of fear of being recognized by Zhen Xin. I felt utterly useless, and so awful I wanted to cry. I couldn't help but run to another room, and cry silently while gazing at the night sky. I was thinking about not being worth cultivating. While others got to be leaders, I was stuck doing general affairs work. What was the point of living like this? I was startled when I caught myself thinking like this. How could I have such thoughts? At that moment, I vaguely recalled God's words: **“For antichrists, status and reputation are their life. ...**

**You could put them in a primeval forest deep in the mountains, and still they would not put aside their pursuit of reputation and status.” I felt like these words described my state, so I found this passage and read it. Almighty God says: “For antichrists, status and reputation are their life. No matter how they live, no matter what environment they live in, no matter what work they do, no matter what they pursue, what their goals are, what their life’s direction is, it all revolves around having a good reputation and a high status. And this aim does not change; they can never put aside such things. This is the true face of antichrists, and their essence. You could put them in a primeval forest deep in the mountains, and still they would not put aside their pursuit of reputation and status. You can put them among any group of people, and all they can think about is still reputation and status. Although antichrists also believe in God, they see the pursuit of reputation and status as equivalent to faith in God and give it equal weight. Which is to say, as they walk the path of faith in God, they also pursue their own reputation and status. It can be said that in antichrists’ hearts, they believe that pursuit of the truth in their faith in God is the pursuit of reputation and status; the pursuit of reputation and status is also the pursuit of the truth, and to gain reputation and status is to gain the truth and life. If they feel that they have no reputation, gains, or status, that no one admires them, or esteems them, or follows them, then they are very disappointed, they believe there is no point in believing in God, no value to it, and they say to themselves, ‘Is such faith in god a failure? Is it hopeless?’ They often deliberate such things in their hearts, they deliberate how they can carve a place out for themselves in the house of God, how they can have a lofty reputation in the church, so that people listen when they talk, and support them when they act, and**

**follow them wherever they go; so that they have the final say in the church, and fame, gain, and status—they really focus on such things in their hearts. These are what such people pursue”** (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Nine (Part Three)). From God’s words, I learned that in all they do, antichrists consider their own prestige and status first, never give up the pursuit of fame and status, and to them, status is as important as their very lives. I reflected on myself, “Why do I never want to do general affairs work? Why do I care so much about being a leader?” I realized the main reason was that I felt leaders had status. Not only did the brothers and sisters admire them, but the upper-level leaders valued them, and the church focused on cultivating them. I felt it was good to be a leader, to be able to show my face, and that only being a leader meant I had promise. I also felt general affairs work was just handling external affairs, that only those who didn’t pursue the truth did such duties, and no one looked up to them. Because of these mistaken ideas, when I saw everyone around me being promoted and cultivated, and some even being elected as leaders, it was a real blow to me, and I always wanted the leader to mention my name. But when the leader cultivated others instead of me, I became so miserable that I didn’t want to see anyone, and I no longer had any desire to do my duty. Spending every day tormented by prestige and status was horrible, to the point that I felt life wasn’t worth living. Wasn’t pursuing prestige and status like this walking the same path as an antichrist? Realizing this kind of scared me, so I quickly prayed to God to repent, “God, my desire for prestige and status is too strong. I don’t want to live in this rebellious state. Please guide me in freeing myself from the shackles of fame and status.”

One day, I read some of God’s words that helped me understand my mistaken perspective on pursuit. Almighty God says: **“Do you always want to spread your wings and take flight, do you always wish to fly solo, to**

be an eagle rather than a little bird? What disposition is this? Is this the principle of human conduct? Your pursuit of human conduct should be based on God's words; only God's words are the truth. You have been too deeply corrupted by Satan, and always take traditional culture—the words of Satan—as the truth, as the object of your pursuit, which makes it easy for you to take the wrong path, to walk the path of resisting God. The thoughts and views of corrupt mankind, and the things they strive for are contrary to the desires of God, to the truth, and to the laws of God's sovereignty over everything, His orchestration of everything, and His control over mankind's fate. So no matter how proper and reasonable this kind of pursuit is according to human thoughts and notions, from God's perspective they are not positive things, and they are not in line with His intentions. Because you go against the fact of God's sovereignty over mankind's fate, and because you wish to go solo, taking your fate into your own hands, you are always hitting walls, so hard that blood flows from your head, and nothing ever works out for you. Why does nothing work out for you? Because the laws that God established are inalterable by any created being. God's authority and power are above all else, inviolable by any created being. People think far too much of their abilities. What is it that makes people always wish to be free of God's sovereignty, and always wish to grab hold of their own fate and plan their own future, and wish to control their prospects, direction, and life goals? Where does this starting point come from? (A corrupt satanic disposition.) What then does a corrupt satanic disposition bring to people? (Opposition to God.) What comes of people opposing God? (Pain.) Pain? It is destruction! Pain isn't the half of it. What you see right before your eyes is pain, negativity, and weakness, and it is resistance and

**complaints—what outcome will these things bring? Annihilation! This is no small matter, and it is no game. People who do not have a God-fearing heart can't see this"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. A Corrupt Disposition Can Only Be Resolved by Accepting the Truth). I was the same as what God's words revealed. I wanted to be like an eagle, not a little bird, and I thought general affairs work made me like a little bird, someone not worth cultivating or being looked up to. Leaders, to me, were like eagles. They had potential, and were valued and looked up to by others. I lived by "Man struggles upward; water flows downward," "People need their pride just as a tree needs its bark," "People should strive to achieve dignity," and other such satanic poisons. I thought that in life, people had to keep striving, and the higher your status the better, otherwise you were a good-for-nothing. Under the control of these mistaken ideas, I couldn't do my duty in a down-to-earth way, but I always pursued being a leader for others' admiration. When I saw the brothers and sisters around me being chosen as leaders, I was miserable, resistant, and couldn't accept it. I thought, "I'm no worse than anyone else. Why can other people be leaders, but I'm stuck doing general affairs work?" I thought general affairs work was for those who don't pursue the truth, so I lived in negativity and started to muddle through and slacked off in my duty. My desire for status was too strong! I knew that each person's caliber and what duties they can do are all preordained by God. My current duty was under God's sovereignty and arrangements too, so I should accept it and submit. I always felt that no one valued me for doing general affairs work, and I became miserable, but that was because my views of pursuit were wrong and I was rebellious. I was unable to submit to God's sovereignty and arrangements, negative, and complaining. In essence, I was opposing, resisting, and rebelling against God. If I went on like that, I could only end up spurned by God.



After that, I read two passages of God's words: **"If you have a sense of burden toward church work, and wish to be involved in it, this is good; but you must reflect on whether you understand the truth, on whether you are able to fellowship the truth to resolve issues, on whether you are able to truly submit to the work of God, and on whether you are able to carry out church work properly according to work arrangements. If you meet these criteria, you may run to be a leader or a worker. What I mean by saying this is that at the very least, people must possess self-awareness. First look at if you are able to discern people, whether you can understand the truth and do things according to principle. If you meet these requirements, you are suitable to be a leader or a worker. If you are not capable of self-appraisal, you can ask the people around you who are familiar with you or close to you. If they all say that you are of insufficient caliber to be a leader, and that just doing your current job well is already good enough, then you should quickly come to know yourself. Since you are of poor caliber, don't spend all your time wanting to be a leader—just do what you can, do your duty properly with both feet firmly on the ground, so that you can have peace of mind. This, too, is good. And if you are capable of being a leader, if you are truly possessed of such caliber and talent, if you possess work capability, and have a sense of burden, then you are precisely the kind of people of talent that the house of God lacks, and you are certain to be promoted and cultivated; but there is the time of God in all things. This wish—the wish to be promoted—is not ambition, but you must have the caliber, and meet the criteria, to be a leader. If you are of poor caliber yet still spend all your time wanting to be a leader, or to take on some important task, or to be responsible for overall work, or to do something that allows you to distinguish yourself,**

**then I tell you: This is ambition. Ambition can bring disaster, so you should be wary of it. People all have a desire to make progress and are all willing to strive toward the truth, which is not a problem. Some people have caliber, meet the criteria for being leaders, and are able to strive toward the truth, and this is a good thing. Others are not possessed of caliber, so they should stick to their own duty, performing the duty that is right in front of them properly and doing it according to principle, and according to the requirements of God's house; for them, that's better, safer, more realistic"** (The Word, Vol. 5. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers (5)). **"People must have the correct understanding and attitude toward promotion and cultivation; in these matters, they must seek the truth, and not follow their own will, or have ambitions and desires. If you feel that you are of good caliber but the house of God has never promoted you, nor has any plans to cultivate you, then don't get frustrated or start complaining, just focus on pursuing the truth and striving forward. When you have some stature and are able to do real work, God's chosen people will naturally select you to be leader. And if you feel that you are of poor caliber, and that you don't stand any chance of being promoted or cultivated, and that it is impossible for your ambitions to be achieved, is this not something good? This will protect you! Since you are of poor caliber, if you encounter a group of blind muddlers who choose you to be their leader, are you not going to be walking over hot coals? You are incapable of doing any work and your eyes and mind are blind. Everything you do is a disruption; your every move is evil doing. You'd be better off doing the work of your current duty well; at least you won't embarrass yourself, and it's better than being a false leader and being the target of criticism behind the scenes. As a person, you must**

**have the measure of yourself, you must have a little self-awareness; if you do, you will be able to avoid taking the wrong path and making serious mistakes”** (The Word, Vol. 5. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers (5)). Reading God’s words was moving for me. I always felt I was better than the brothers and sisters around me, and I wanted to be a leader, but was I really suitable for that? Did I really have the caliber to be a leader? Leaders must pursue the truth, be capable in work, and have good humanity. Not just anyone can be a leader. If you don’t have the qualifications to be a leader and can’t do real work, even if you become one, you won’t remain one for long, and some become false leaders. I had actually been responsible for the church’s work before, but because my caliber was low and I wasn’t very capable, I couldn’t do real work or solve others’ problems and difficulties in life entry, and I ended up being reassigned. In terms of caliber and work ability, I really wasn’t qualified to be a leader. In comparison, I was fairly skilled at general affairs work, I could do some real work in that area. The church arranges work based on each person’s caliber and strengths. This way people can play their part properly, and it benefits the work of the church. But I didn’t know my own measure. I clearly lacked the caliber and qualifications to be a leader, yet I always felt I was talented and superior to others, and I always wanted to be promoted. When I saw the leader cultivating others but not me, I felt disgruntled that the leader didn’t value me, and I became perfunctory in my duty, negative and hostile toward God. I was so arrogant and lacking self-knowledge! Seeing this, I felt very guilty, and I became able to treat my current duty correctly and willing to stand in my own place and do my duty in a down-to-earth manner.

Later, I heard a hymn of God’s word **“I’m Just a Tiny Created Being”**:

**1 Oh God! Whether I have status or not, I now understand myself. If my status is high it is because of Your elevation, and if it is low it is because of Your ordination. Everything is in Your hands. I have neither any choices, nor any complaints. You ordained that I would be born in this country and among this people, and all that I should do is to be completely submissive under Your dominion because everything is within what You have ordained.**

**2 I do not give thought to status; after all, I am but a created being. If You place me in the bottomless pit, in the lake of fire and brimstone, I am nothing but a created being. If You use me, I am a created being. If You perfect me, I am yet a created being. If You do not perfect me, I will still love You because I am no more than a created being.**

**3 I am nothing more than a minuscule created being of the Lord of creation, just one among all created humans. It was You who created me, and now You have once again placed me in Your hands to do with me as You will. I am willing to be Your tool and Your foil because everything is what You have ordained. No one can change it. All things and all events are in Your hands.**

—The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Why Are You Unwilling to Be a Foil?

As I contemplated the words of God, my heart was brightened. My status, high or low, was preordained by God, and whether or not I had status, I was just a paltry created being. I was a created being if I had high status, and I was still a created being if I had low status. My essence wouldn't change. The church arranged for me to do general affairs work, so I should take my own place, make full use of my strengths, and do my best to do the work well. This was my obligation as a created being. This

realization gave me a sense of release, and I silently prayed to God, “God! I don’t want to be negative and oppose You anymore. Regardless of my status, I’ll submit to Your sovereignty and arrangements and fulfill my duty.” After that, I no longer resisted the situations arranged by God. I contemplated how to do my current duty well and do my work pragmatically. I felt really at ease when I put this into practice.

Later, I reflected and realized there was another reason I didn’t want to do general affairs work, which was that I was holding on to an absurd view. I thought people who did general affairs work didn’t pursue the truth, that they were on a lower rung and had no hope of salvation, and that only those who were cultivated and had important roles pursued the truth, and had a chance to be saved. I read more of God’s words that addresses this fallacious view. Almighty God says: **“In the house of God, there is constant mention of accepting God’s commission and performing one’s duty properly. How does duty come into being? To speak broadly, it comes into being as a result of God’s management work of bringing salvation to humanity; to speak specifically, as God’s management work unfolds among mankind, various work appears that requires people to cooperate and complete it. This has given rise to responsibilities and missions for people to fulfill, and these responsibilities and missions are the duties God bestows upon mankind. In God’s house, the various tasks that require people’s cooperation are the duties they should perform. So, are there differences between duties in terms of better and worse, lofty and lowly, or great and small? Such differences do not exist; as long as something has to do with God’s management work, is a requirement of the work of His house, and is required by spreading God’s gospel, then it is a person’s duty. This is the origin and definition of duty. ... Regardless of what your duty is, it**

is a mission God has given you. Sometimes you may be required to look after or safeguard an important object. This might be a comparatively trivial matter that can only be said to be a responsibility of yours, but it is a task God has given you; you accepted it from Him. You accepted it from God's hands, and this is your duty" (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. What Is the Adequate Performance of Duty?). **"It is not the case that people become someone who has truth realities as soon as they start doing their duty. Doing one's duty is no more than one method and one channel to take. In the doing of their duties, people use the pursuit of the truth to experience the work of God, gradually understand and accept the truth, and then practice the truth. They then reach a state where they cast off their corrupt disposition, get rid of the bonds and control of the corrupt disposition of Satan, and so they become someone who has the truth reality and someone with a normal humanity. Only when you have normal humanity will your performance of your duty and your actions be edifying to people and satisfactory to God. And only when people are approved of by God for their performance of their duty can they be an acceptable created being"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. To Gain the Truth, One Must Learn From the People, Events, and Things Nearby). God's words reversed my fallacious view of my duty. I learned that duties arise from God's management work to save mankind, and there is no distinction between high and low, or great and small. No matter what the duty, it is an obligation and responsibility for people, and we must do our best to complete it. The church's work requires cooperation between those doing every duty. Each one is indispensable. Before, I didn't understand the truth. I followed my notions, thinking general affairs work was lowly and I had no hope of receiving salvation. That's entirely a misunderstanding of God. Actually,

whether someone can be saved has nothing to do with their status or duty. It is not the case that being a leader means you'll possess the truth and be saved. If I became a leader but didn't pursue the truth or act out of principles, I'd end up dismissed and eliminated. I thought of the antichrists and false leaders who had been revealed. The church cultivated them for important duties, but they didn't pursue the truth. They pursued prestige and status, engaged in a personal enterprise, were hostile to God's house, and in the end, they were eliminated. God is righteous. He doesn't determine people's outcomes based on whether they were cultivated or valued, or whether they had high status. It's based on whether they've gained the truth and changed their life disposition. This is God's standard for determining if someone can be saved.

My experience during that time showed me a little more clearly the nature of the pursuit of prestige and status. Pursuing fame and status is not the right path, but is resisting God. Nothing matters more than pursuing the truth. In addition, it also gave me a little self-knowledge, a correct view of myself, and my desire to pursue being a leader isn't so strong anymore. When I hear about certain brothers and sisters being chosen as leaders, although it still affects me emotionally sometimes, I can handle it appropriately, I am no longer so constrained, and I can cooperate with my brothers and sisters in my duty normally. Thank God!

## 85. Only Wise Virgins Can Welcome the Lord

By Mingzhi, China

The Lord Jesus spoke of two types of people when He prophesied His return: the wise virgins and the foolish virgins. All who hear the Lord's voice and then accept and submit, are wise virgins. All who don't hear His voice, or who hear it but don't believe, or even deny and condemn Him, are foolish virgins. Wise virgins are wise because they seek the voice of the Lord when they hear of testimony to His return, and on hearing His voice they recognize and welcome Him. But foolish virgins don't listen to the Lord's voice. They simply trust what they're told by the pastors, elders and priests, and believe their own notions. They may hear the Lord's voice, but don't dare to accept it, and so miss their chance to welcome the Lord. This is where the foolish virgins go wrong. I used to be just like a foolish virgin. I blindly believed what the priests and bishops said about false christs appearing and misleading people in the last days, and thought I'd better not look into testimonies claiming that the Lord Jesus had returned and was expressing the truth to do the work of judgment in the last days. So, I nearly lost the Lord's salvation of the last days.

I followed my family into the Catholic faith when I was little, and I'd always hear the priest say in Mass, "The time for the Lord to return is near. Don't listen to anyone else's sermons. The Bible says: **'Then if any man shall say to you: Lo here is Christ, or there, do not believe him. For there shall arise false Christs and false prophets, and shall show great signs and wonders, insomuch as to deceive (if possible) even the elect'** (Matthew 24:23-24). False christs will appear in the last days. You are small of stature and lack discernment, so you're easily misled. Believing in the wrong way would be a betrayal of the Lord! We must keep to the way of the



Lord and wait for Him to come and bring us into His kingdom. We cannot listen to, read, or inquire into other teachings, without exception, especially those that claim the Lord has already returned.” I thought the priest had a point. I was immature in life and lacked discernment, and if I was led astray by a false christ my years of faith would all be in vain. I swore to myself that I would be careful, and that I wouldn’t listen to anyone who preached other teachings.

One day in April 2012, a parishioner named Mu Zheng said, “The Lord Jesus has returned. He’s Almighty God in the flesh. He’s doing new work, the work of judgment beginning with God’s house, as prophesied in the Bible.” I was surprised on hearing this, and doubtful, so I asked, “How do you know the Lord has returned and is doing new work? How can you be sure?” Mu Zheng’s response was, “The Lord Jesus said: **‘My sheep hear My voice: and I know them, and they follow Me’** (John 10:27), **‘And at midnight there was a cry made: Behold the bridegroom comes, go you forth to meet him’** (Matthew 25:6), and, **‘Behold, I stand at the gate, and knock. If any man shall hear My voice, and open to Me the door, I will come in to him, and will sup with him, and he with Me’** (Revelation 3:20). The Lord Jesus told us He would return and knock at our doors with His words. His sheep will recognize His voice from the words He utters. They’ll welcome the Lord’s return and attend the Lamb’s wedding feast. They are the wise virgins. Just think of when the Lord Jesus appeared and did His work. People like Peter, John and Philip listened to His voice and knew that He was the awaited Messiah. They readily followed the Lord Jesus and gained His salvation. I’ve read many of Almighty God’s words and I’ve confirmed that they are the truth. They possess authority and are the Lord’s voice. That’s how I’m sure Almighty God is the Lord Jesus returned. If, instead of listening out for the voice of the Lord, we focus

blindly on being vigilant against false christs, shutting ourselves off for fear of being misled, and if we don't inquire into it when we hear of testimony to the Lord's return, then we're liable to shut out the Lord and miss His salvation of the last days."

Mu Zheng's fellowship was enlightening for me. Listening for the Lord's voice to welcome Him is in line with the Bible and the Lord's words. If I didn't look into it or attend to the Lord's voice when someone said the Lord Jesus had returned, how would I welcome Him? I'd never heard anyone fellowship the Lord's words like that, and I found it enlightening. I wanted to learn more, but then I remembered the priest repeatedly warning us about false christs misleading people in the last days, and telling us not under any circumstances to trust teachings from other churches. I was immediately on the alert, reminding myself against casually listening to other teachings and that my years of faith would all be wasted if I took up the wrong belief. So, I dismissed what Mu Zheng had said. He told me a few more times that I should read Almighty God's words to see if they were the voice of God, but I was wary, and always found ways to decline.

A couple of months later, my wife returned from her hometown one day with a copy of **The Word Appears in the Flesh**. She said it was "**what the Spirit saith to the churches**" (Revelation 2:7) and that Almighty God is the Lord Jesus returned. She suggested that I read it. I was afraid that she'd been led astray, so I told her that she had to be more careful about what preaching she listened to, but she was determined to believe in Almighty God. I was afraid that she'd betrayed the Lord, and could only fast and pray for her in tears. A few days later, my mother-in-law also came to preach the Lord's return to me. She told me, "The Lord said: '**I come quickly**'" (Revelation 22:7). If we decide that all news of the Lord's return is false because we're afraid of being misled by false christs, and uniformly refuse

to listen to, read, or investigate it, wouldn't we be denying and condemning the Lord's return? Wouldn't that be like giving up eating for fear of choking? If we shut out the true Christ, it will be too late for regrets. By asking us to guard against false christs, the Lord is telling us that Christ will come in the last days, and that false christs will also emerge and pose as Him to mislead people—this means that we need to learn to discern the true Christ from the false ones. If we can't do that, and simply reject and refuse to listen to any news of the Lord's coming, then we're liable to miss our chance to welcome the Lord, and we will be abandoned by Him." I was moved by what my mother-in-law said, and I thought, "That's right. I've been waiting day and night to welcome the Lord. How will I ever hear the voice of God and welcome the Lord if I uniformly refuse to listen to, read, or investigate the news of His return? It seems like always being on guard is not a solution to this problem. What if I rejected the Lord? That would be so foolish!" After my mother-in-law left, I saw my wife attentively reading **The Word Appears in the Flesh**. I couldn't help but think about how desolate the church had been over the past few years, and how all the parishioners had become negative, weak, and apathetic toward their belief in God. It had been a long time since I'd seen my wife so full of faith. Could those words be as powerful and authoritative as they said? Could they be the voice of God? I also thought about how enlightening it had been listening to Mu Zheng. What if the Lord really had returned? I decided that I should investigate this further to make sure that I didn't miss my chance to welcome the Lord's return. So I prayed to God to grant me the discernment to hear His voice.

After dinner that evening, my wife and I read this passage of Almighty God's words: **"'Belief in God' means believing that there is a God; this is the simplest concept as regards believing in God. What's more,**

**believing that there is a God is not the same as truly believing in God; rather, it is a kind of simple faith with strong religious overtones. True faith in God means the following: On the basis of the belief that God holds sovereignty over all things, one experiences His words and His work, purges one's corrupt disposition, satisfies the intentions of God, and comes to know God. Only a journey of this kind may be called 'faith in God'"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Preface). Almighty God's words were wonderful. I saw that faith isn't just a matter of reciting scripture every day, and attending gatherings and Mass like clockwork. We also need to focus on practicing God's words, rid ourselves of our corrupt dispositions, and have true knowledge of the Lord. Only that kind of faith accords with God's intention. The more I thought about it, the more I felt that Almighty God's words were truly wonderful, that they were the truth, and not something that could be uttered by man. It seemed very likely that they were the words of God. When this occurred to me, I became less guarded.

A few days later, Mu Zheng came by our shop to see me, and I told him what I'd been thinking about over the past few days. He said, "I used to feel the same way. I was afraid of being misled by a false christ, so I blindly believed the priest and wouldn't listen to anyone who preached the Lord's return. But I never thought about whether the priest's words accorded with those of the Lord. The Lord told us that false christs would come to mislead people in the last days, because He wanted us to learn how to discern them. But the priest misrepresented the Lord Jesus' words, and told us not to investigate, read, or listen to any news of the Lord's return. Wasn't this obstructing us from welcoming His return? If the priest was genuinely concerned about us being misled, why didn't he teach us how to discern the true Christ from the false ones? If we could do that, we wouldn't be led

astray.” Mu Zheng’s explanation made sense to me. If we were passive and cautious, like the priest wanted, that would entirely contravene the Lord’s words. It was just a covert way of keeping us from welcoming the Lord’s return. I knew that I couldn’t just blindly obey the priest anymore. I had to be a wise virgin and seek the voice of the Lord and welcome Him. I eagerly asked Mu Zheng to explain to me how to discern the true Christ from the false ones. He said, “Actually, the Lord Jesus has already told us the principles for discerning them in Matthew 24:24. He said that false christs and false prophets will display great signs and wonders. That’s the principal manifestation of a false christ of the last days misleading people.” Then Mu Zheng read a passage of Almighty God’s words for me: **“If, during the present day, there is to emerge a person who is able to display signs and wonders, cast out demons, heal the sick, and perform many miracles, and if this person claims that they are Jesus who has come, then this would be a counterfeit produced by evil spirits which imitate Jesus. Remember this! God does not repeat the same work. Jesus’ stage of work has already been completed, and God will never again undertake that stage of work. The work of God is irreconcilable with the notions of man; for example, the Old Testament foretold the coming of a Messiah, and the result of this prophecy was Jesus’ coming. This having already happened, it would be wrong for another Messiah to come again. Jesus has already come once, and it would be wrong if Jesus were to come again this time. There is one name for every age, and each name contains a characterization of that age. In the notions of man, God must always display signs and wonders, must always heal the sick and cast out demons, and must always be just like Jesus. Yet this time, God is not like that at all. If, during the last days, God still displayed signs and wonders, and still cast out demons and healed the**

**sick—if He did exactly the same as Jesus—then God would be repeating the same work, and the work of Jesus would have no significance or value. Thus, God carries out one stage of work in every age. Once each stage of His work has been completed, it is soon imitated by evil spirits, and after Satan begins to follow on the heels of God, God changes to a different method. Once God has completed a stage of His work, it is imitated by evil spirits. You must be clear about this”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Knowing God’s Work Today). After reading Almighty God’s words, Mu Zheng said, “God is eternally new. He doesn’t do the same work twice. Every time He comes to do His work, He begins a new age and ends the old one, bringing in a newer and more elevated stage of His work. When the Lord Jesus did His work, He didn’t repeat the work of the Age of Law. He built upon it with His new work—the work of redeeming mankind. He commenced the Age of Grace and concluded the Age of Law. If the Lord returned in the last days to repeat the work of redemption, healing the sick, casting out demons, and showing signs and wonders, then God’s work would not move forward. Almighty God has come in the last days; He has opened up the Age of Kingdom and ended the Age of Grace. He’s doing the work of judgment beginning with God’s house, upon the foundation of the work of redemption. He’s expressing the truth to judge and cleanse people, so that they can free themselves from the bonds and constraints of sin, be purified and attain salvation. But false christs are evil spirits and devils in their essence. No matter what signs and wonders they display, or how much they call themselves God, they cannot express the truth or utter the words of God, and they certainly cannot begin a new age and end the old one. False christs just imitate the old words and work of the Lord, or show a few simple signs and wonders and spout a few specious fallacies and heresies to mislead

muddled people who lack discernment. But false christs can never replicate the miracles of the Lord Jesus, like feeding the five thousand with five loaves and two fish, rebuking the wind and the sea, and bringing Lazarus back from the dead.” My heart felt brighter after hearing Mu Zheng’s fellowship. I thought, “I’ve never heard such a clear explanation of how to discern the true Christ from the false ones. Almighty God’s words are the truth and they give people a path to follow. Now I see that false christs can only copy the work the Lord has done in the past and show a few signs and wonders to mislead people. Only God can begin a new age and end the old one, and express the truth to sustain us.”

Then Mu Zheng read a couple more passages of Almighty God’s words: **“God become flesh is called Christ, and so the Christ that can give people the truth is called God. There is nothing excessive about this, for He possesses the essence of God, and possesses God’s disposition, and wisdom in His work, that are unattainable by man. Those who call themselves christ, yet cannot do the work of God, are frauds. Christ is not merely the manifestation of God on earth, but also the particular flesh assumed by God as He carries out and completes His work among man. This flesh cannot be supplanted by just any man, but is a flesh that can adequately bear God’s work on earth, and express the disposition of God, and well represent God, and provide man with life. Sooner or later, those who impersonate Christ will all fall, for although they claim to be christ, they possess none of the essence of Christ. And so I say that the authenticity of Christ cannot be defined by man, but is answered and decided by God Himself”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Only Christ of the Last Days Can Give Man the Way of Eternal Life). **“He who is God incarnate shall possess the essence of God, and He who is God incarnate shall possess the expression of God. Since**

**God becomes flesh, He shall bring forth the work He intends to do, and since God becomes flesh, He shall express what He is, and shall be able to bring the truth to man, bestow life upon him, and point the way for him. Flesh that does not have the essence of God is decidedly not the incarnate God; of this there is no doubt. If man intends to inquire into whether it is God's incarnate flesh, then he must corroborate this from the disposition He expresses and the words He speaks. Which is to say, to corroborate whether or not it is God's incarnate flesh, and whether or not it is the true way, one must discriminate on the basis of His essence. And so, in determining whether it is the flesh of God incarnate, the key lies in His essence (His work, His utterances, His disposition, and many other aspects), rather than external appearance. If man scrutinizes only His external appearance, and as a result overlooks His essence, this shows that man is benighted and ignorant"** (The Word, Vol. 1.

The Appearance and Work of God. Preface). After reading Almighty God's words to me, Mu Zheng said, "Christ is God clothed in the flesh, as the Son of man, who comes to appear and work among man. From the outside, He looks just like a regular person, but His essence is divine. That's why He can express the truth and express the disposition of God, and do the work of redeeming and saving mankind. No human being could achieve that. The key to discerning the true Christ is seeing whether He can express the truth and do the work of salvation. This is the most fundamental, most critical principle. When the Lord Jesus appeared and did His work, He looked just like a regular person. But He revealed mysteries of the kingdom of heaven and bestowed on mankind the way of repentance. He taught people to love the Lord with all their heart, soul and mind. He taught them to love others as themselves, and to forgive people seventy times seven times. He expressed God's loving, merciful disposition, and ultimately He was crucified as an



eternal sin offering, thus completing the work of redemption for mankind. We can be sure from the Lord Jesus' work and words, and the disposition He expressed, that He was Christ. He was God Himself incarnate. Now Almighty God has come in the last days, and He does the work of judgment beginning with God's house. He expresses all truths which can cleanse and save mankind. Almighty God has revealed the mysteries of God's management plan to save mankind, how people are corrupted by Satan, how God saves us step by step, the mystery of God's incarnations, the significance of God's judgment work in the last days, how He determines the destination and outcome for different types of people, how Christ's kingdom is realized on earth, and more. Almighty God not only unveils the mysteries of the Bible, but also exposes and judges the source of our sinning and resistance against God—namely, mankind's satanic nature and various satanic dispositions. He reveals God's righteous, holy disposition that will tolerate no offense, and shows us the way to cast off sin and be purified. He tells us how we should have faith, how to repent to get into God's kingdom, how we should submit to God and love God, what following His will is, and more. Almighty God's work in the last days has already made a group of overcomers, and more and more of God's chosen people have given testimonies of overcoming Satan. Almighty God's kingdom gospel has spread across many countries, from East to West, entirely fulfilling the Lord's prophecy: **'For as lightning comes out of the east, and appears even into the west: so shall the coming of the Son of man be'** (Matthew 24:27). The truths Almighty God expresses, the work of judgment He does, and the fruit of His work all prove that He is the Lord Jesus returned. He is the Christ of the last days. No one can deny this. It's just as Almighty God says: **'He lets His work affirm His identity, and lets that which He reveals attest to His essence. His essence is not baseless;**

**His identity was not seized by His hand; it is determined by His work and His essence'** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. The Essence of Christ Is Submission to the Will of the Heavenly Father). False christs don't have a divine essence and they can't express the truth. No matter how they insist that they're God, that they're Christ, it's all false and is designed to mislead people. Following them is like falling for a bunch of crooks, and leads only to ruination. No matter how they may pose as Christ, they can only deceive people for a while. They're bound to be exposed by the facts and eventually perish in defeat. Only Christ can express the truth and do the work of mankind's salvation. That's why the key to discerning the true Christ is seeing whether He can express the truth and voice of God and whether He can do the work of cleansing and saving man. That is crucial."

I was fully enlightened by Mu Zheng's fellowship. The key to discerning the true Christ is seeing whether He can express the truth. If so, then He is Christ, the Lord returned. For anyone who can't express the truth, no matter how they claim that they are Christ, they are still a fraud, a false christ and a misleader. I found this method of discernment was both simple and practical. Just wonderful! Almighty God's words are crystal clear on how to tell the true Christ from the false christs. They really are the truth! I thought of how foolish and ignorant I'd been, blindly believing what the priest said. Afraid of being misled by a false christ, I hadn't inquired into Almighty God's work of the last days. I hadn't tried to listen for the Lord's voice, and as a result I nearly missed my chance to welcome the Lord. If not for the Lord's mercy and tolerance, and for His knocking at my door by means of my loved ones and my brother repeatedly sharing the gospel with me, I'd have been waiting in religion my whole life without hearing God's voice or welcoming the Lord's return. I truly give thanks for Almighty God's salvation!

## 86. Don't Let Affection Cloud Your Mind

By Xin Jing, China

In June 2015, I went to a church to serve as a gospel deacon. At the time Li Jie was in charge of watering newcomers, and because of the needs of our duties, we worked together quite often. As well as being roughly the same age, we led similar lives and had similar personalities. Most importantly, both our husbands opposed our faith because of the CCP's repression of believers. We had similar experiences and a lot of language in common, so we got along particularly well. At that time, I had just arrived at that church and was not familiar with the other brothers and sisters, and I was also facing a lot of challenges in doing my duty. Li Jie was very enthusiastic in fellowshipping with me and helping me, and I often helped her with any problems in her life. Gradually we started sharing our innermost thoughts and feelings with one another and we built a real rapport.

Later on, I was elected as a church leader and we weren't in contact as often as before. A few months later, quite a few brothers and sisters spoke to me about Li Jie. They said she was really arrogant, and when others had problems, she not only failed to help them patiently, but also scolded and belittled them. Because of this, everyone felt constrained by her. The supervisor pointed this out to her, but she refused to accept it and answered back rudely. She was so disruptive that gatherings could not make any progress. When the brothers and sisters fellowshipped with her, she remained adamant and shifted the blame onto others. Her fellowshipping of the truth was unclear and newcomers didn't understand her, and sometimes she spoke negatively. In those two months she hadn't been doing well watering newcomers. When I heard of this situation, I realized that Li Jie

was no longer suited to watering work. My co-workers suggested dismissing her, saying the work of the church would be delayed if she stayed on. I felt bad on hearing this, as she had helped me so much and we were such good friends. What would she think of me, I thought, if I agreed to her dismissal? Would she say I was heartless? Moreover, she had a strong sense of self-respect and would be devastated to be dismissed. Thinking all this over, I didn't have the heart to dismiss her. So I made the excuse that Li Jie hadn't been doing well in her duty recently, but it wasn't entirely her fault. The newcomers she watered had many religious notions and were slow to learn, so her poor results were excusable. Also, she worked hard and put in long hours. It would take time to find a suitable replacement if we dismissed her, so it was better to keep her on for now. The co-workers were hesitant when they heard what I said, but then everyone reluctantly agreed to let her continue to do her duty for the time being while at the same time looking for a replacement as quickly as possible. This was a relief, but I was still somewhat ill at ease, thinking that even though she hadn't been dismissed for now, it would have to be done when a suitable replacement was found. Maybe if I gave some extra help her performance could improve and she wouldn't have to be dismissed. So, that night I went straight to Li Jie's house after my evening gathering, talked to her about the reasons why her performance was ineffective, and mentioned some problems in her duty. But she had no self-awareness and constantly argued. I was pretty upset to see her behave that way. I fellowshiped with her again many times after that to help her improve the results in her duty, but her performance never improved, which worried me a lot. A while later, I was contacted several times by a superior leader checking in on the matter of dismissing Li Jie. I just fobbed her off by saying that I hadn't found a suitable replacement. Later, Li Jie privately got in touch—quite possibly

under police observation—with a sister she'd been advised against contacting due to security concerns, after which I had no choice but to stop her from performing her duty.

The church later put me in charge of gospel work, and I immediately thought of Li Jie. She was sitting at home, miserable and without a duty to do. She'd been very fond of preaching the gospel, so it seemed like a great opportunity. I raised the idea in a co-worker meeting. I said, "Li Jie used to preach the gospel for a long time; it's her forte. She knows she made mistakes and regrets them very much. Let's give her the opportunity to preach the gospel." Having heard this several co-workers agreed. To my surprise, before long the brothers and sisters told me that Li Jie was biased against the gospel deacon and at gatherings she spread the word that the deacon had undermined her in the past. She kept going on about it. This led to the brothers and sisters being biased against and ostracizing the gospel deacon. Li Jie also contradicted and contended with the deacon when she was carrying out her work, and some of the sisters took Li Jie's side. This meant that the gospel deacon couldn't do her job, which seriously disrupted the gospel work. I was astonished to hear that. The deacon had long since apologized to Li Jie about what happened in the past. Moreover I had fellowshiped with her, telling her to know herself and to learn from the experience rather than being critical of it. I never expected that she'd still hold a grudge, though. Her behavior was already really disruptive within the church. If she wouldn't repent and things went on like this, she'd need to be isolated and self-reflect. The more I thought about it, the more I worried about her. Later I fellowshiped with her a number of times. She said the right things to my face, but kept acting the same as before in gatherings. Some other deacons also fellowshiped with her and helped her, but she had no self-awareness and was not willing to change.

Before long the superior leader learned about Li Jie's behavior. She said that Li Jie was disrupting the work of the church, wouldn't repent after repeated fellowships, and was a bad influence. In accordance with the principles, she had to be dismissed from her duty, and then cleared out from the church if she still didn't repent. My heart sank when I heard this. I thought about how Li Jie had left home, given up work and suffered so much. It would be a real shame if she had to be cleared out. She'd helped me so much when I had encountered problems in the past, and I was the person she was closest to in the church. If I didn't stand up now and speak on her behalf, and she found out about it, would she say that I was utterly heartless? How could I face her again if she really were cleared out? She would certainly resent me, and would feel really hurt. Thinking about this I said to my co-workers: "Li Jie does have some problems, but she has been performing her duties in the church all the time and was effective in preaching the gospel, so maybe dealing with her this way is too harsh. Should we give her another chance and help her more, and maybe she will understand and change?" Then a co-worker said to me very seriously, "Sister, you're acting without principles and you're getting caught up in your feelings. Li Jie was reasonably effective in preaching the gospel in the past, and she has worked hard and suffered a lot, but she doesn't accept the truth. She hates the truth, and she's not playing a positive role in the church. She's already seriously disrupted the work of the church. You can't always shield her based on your feelings. Look at yourself; is this not so?" When she said this, I realized I really hadn't been following the principles with Li Jie, but I was still torn. I still wanted to give her another chance. On my way home, I suddenly felt dizzy, as if the world was spinning, and I was afraid to open my eyes. I couldn't even walk. I realized it was probably God disciplining me. I silently prayed to God. Just then, some of God's words

came clearly to my mind. God says: **“When people offend God, it might not be because of one event or one thing they said, but rather because of an attitude they hold and a state they are in. This is a very frightening thing”** (The Word, Vol. 2. On Knowing God. God Himself, the Unique VII). Thinking on these words from God put fear in my heart. I knew I might have offended God in some way. I began to self-reflect and realized that I had just kept stubbornly sticking up for Li Jie. I knew she played no good role in the church yet I indulged her disruption. When the superior leader and my co-workers suggested stopping her duty, I spoke up for her time and again and did nothing to protect the work of the church. I really deserved to be disciplined. Thinking on this, I hurriedly prayed to God, saying that I was willing to reflect on myself in this matter. After praying, barely able to support myself, I staggered home.

I read a passage of God’s words when I got home. God says: **“Some people are extremely sentimental. Every day, in all that they say, and in all of the ways they behave toward others, they live by their feelings. They feel affection for this person and that person, and they spend their days engaged in the niceties of affection. In everything they encounter, they live in the realm of feelings. ... You could say that feelings are this person’s fatal flaw. They are constrained by their feelings in all matters, they are incapable of practicing the truth or acting according to principle, and they are often prone to rebel against God. Feelings are their greatest weakness, their fatal flaw, and their feelings are entirely able to bring them to ruin and destroy them. People who are overly sentimental are incapable of putting the truth into practice or submitting to God. They are preoccupied with the flesh and they are foolish and muddleheaded. It is that sort of person’s nature to be very sentimental, and they live by their feelings”** (The Word,

Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. How to Know Man's Nature). I was really moved when I read this and my tears flowed uncontrollably. Only then did I realize that I really was being guided by feelings in this matter. When involved with Li Jie's case, I spoke up based on my feelings, always concerned for her feelings and taking her side just because she had helped me and we had a good relationship. I couldn't handle matters fairly and justly according to principles. Actually, I knew that she wasn't doing well in her duty, that she was disruptive, that letting her continue was more hindrance than help, and that she should have been replaced immediately. But because of our good relationship, I spoke up based on my feelings, finding all sorts of reasons and excuses to convince my co-workers not to replace her. I even wanted to help her improve her performance so she could keep her duty. If not for our good relationship, I wouldn't have done everything I could to speak up for her. Had it been any other brother or sister I would have handled the matter according to principles. I finally saw that feelings were my Achilles' heel, that I'd been following my feelings in word and action, shielding Li Jie at every turn with no regard for the truth principles. I fundamentally did not consider the work or interests of the church. I was so selfish and despicable!

I read a couple more passages of God's words that gave me a greater insight into what was acting on feelings. Almighty God says: **"What issues relate to feelings? First is how you evaluate your own family members, and how you approach the things they do. 'The things they do' here naturally include when they disrupt and disturb the church's work, when they pass judgment on people behind their backs, when they engage in some of the practices of disbelievers, and so on. Can you approach these things impartially? When it is necessary for you to write an evaluation of your family members, can you do so objectively**



**and impartially, putting your own feelings aside? This relates to how you approach your family members. Furthermore, do you harbor feelings toward those who you get along with or who previously helped you? Are you able to view their actions and comportment in an objective, impartial, and accurate way? If they disrupt and disturb the work of the church, will you be able to promptly report or expose them after you find out about it? Also, do you harbor feelings toward those who are relatively close to you, or who share similar interests with you? Do you possess an impartial and objective evaluation, definition, and way of dealing with their actions and behavior? Suppose that these people, who you have a sentimental connection with, are handled by the church according to the principles, and the outcome of this isn't in line with your own notions—how would you approach this? Would you be able to obey? Would you secretly continue to be entangled with them, and would you be misled by them and even incited by them to make excuses for them, justify them, and defend them? Would you come to the aid of and take a bullet for those who have helped you, while disregarding the truth principles and ignoring the interests of God's house? Aren't these various issues to do with feelings? Some people say, 'Don't feelings only relate to relatives and family members? Isn't the scope of feelings just your parents, brothers and sisters, and other family members?' No, feelings include a wide scope of people. Forget about impartially evaluating their own family members—some people aren't even capable of evaluating their good friends and buddies impartially, and they twist the facts when they speak about these people. For example, if their buddy doesn't attend to his proper work and always engages in crooked and wicked practices in his duty, they will describe him as quite playful, and say that his humanity is**

immature and not yet stable. Aren't there feelings within these words? This is speaking words that are laden with feelings. If someone who has no connection to them doesn't attend to their proper work and engages in crooked and wicked practices, they will have harsher things to say about them, and may even condemn them. Is this not a manifestation of speaking and acting based on feelings? Are people who live by their feelings impartial? Are they upstanding? (No.) What is wrong with people who speak according to their feelings? Why can't they treat others fairly? Why can't they speak based on the truth principles? People who are double-tongued and never base their words on facts are wicked. Not being impartial when one speaks, always speaking according to one's feelings and for one's own sake, and not according to the truth principles, not thinking of the work of God's house, and just protecting one's personal feelings, fame, gain, and status—this is the character of antichrists. This is how antichrists speak; everything they say is wicked, disturbing, and disruptive. People who live among the preferences and interests of the flesh live among their feelings. People who live by their feelings are those who do not accept or practice the **truth at all**" (The Word, Vol. 5. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers (2)). **"I do not give people the opportunity to express their feelings, for I am without fleshly feelings, and have grown to detest the feelings of people to an extreme degree. It is because of the feelings between people that I have been cast to one side, and thus I have become an 'other' in their eyes; it is because of the feelings between people that I have been forgotten; it is because of the feelings of man that he seizes the opportunity to pick up his 'conscience'; it is because of the feelings of man that he is always averse to My chastisement; it is because of the feelings of man that he calls Me**

**unfair and unjust, and says that I am heedless of man's feelings in My handling of things. Do I also have kin upon earth? Who has ever, like Me, worked day and night, without thought for food or sleep, for the sake of My entire management plan? How could man be comparable to God? How could man be compatible with God?"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. God's Words to the Entire Universe, Chapter 28). Reading the word of God gave me more clarity on what it means to act based on feelings, and I saw that God hates people's feelings. Acting on feelings can lead us to violate the truth principles, do evil, and resist God. As a church leader, I wasn't practicing the truth or treating people fairly and in accordance with principles. Instead, I was safeguarding a personal relationship based on my feelings, not replacing someone who should have been replaced, using the work of the church to do favors and protecting my own image at detriment to the interests of the church. This harmed the lives of the brothers and sisters and brought nothing but disruption to the work of the church. I was biting the hand that feeds me—I was being a traitor. Wasn't that a case of humiliating and resisting God? I was filled with remorse when I realized these things, and hurriedly prayed to God and repented. Later at a gathering, I opened up and fellowshiped about how I had acted on feelings on Li Jie's matter. Also, based on her behavior, I removed her from her duty and asked her to self-reflect.

Six months or so went by, and Li Jie, far from reflecting and becoming aware of her evil behavior, was still insisting she'd been wronged and that the leaders and deacons hadn't been fair. Behind their backs, she accused them of going out of their way to punish her. A sister I was partnered with fellowshiped on the truth with her and dissected her behavior, but she remained defiant and was full of excuses. Li Jie even stopped talking with the sister, directly turning her back on her in protest. She was spreading

negativity among others, talking about how much she'd suffered without any blessings in return while the undeserving were blessed. Some of those she was in contact with were misled, took her side, and defended her. All these things made me think of a passage of God's words: **"Those who give vent to their poisonous, malicious talk within the church, who spread rumors, foment disharmony, and form cliques among the brothers and sisters—they should have been expelled from the church. Yet because now is a different era of God's work, these people are restricted, for they are decidedly to be eliminated. All who have been corrupted by Satan have corrupt dispositions. Some have nothing more than corrupt dispositions, while others are different: Not only do they have corrupt satanic dispositions, but their nature is also extremely malicious. Not only do their words and actions reveal their corrupt, satanic dispositions; these people are, moreover, the genuine devils and Satans. Their behavior disrupts and disturbs God's work, it disturbs the brothers' and sisters' life entry, and it damages the normal life of the church. Sooner or later, these wolves in sheep's clothing must be cleansed away; an unsparing attitude, an attitude of rejection, should be adopted toward these lackeys of Satan. Only this is standing on the side of God, and those who fail to do so are wallowing in the mire with Satan"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. A Warning to Those Who Do Not Practice the Truth). Reading God's words I was more discerning of Li Jie. She absolutely did not accept the truth, often spread negativity within the church, was disruptive to church life, and wasn't playing a positive role. She was a bad apple and created an unpleasant atmosphere in the church. After being pruned and removed from her duty, she remained defiant, tried to find fault with leaders and workers, and judged and attacked them. That kind of truth-hating, vindictive, aggressive, evil person can never be saved,

even if they stay on in the church. They will only do evil and disrupt the church's work, like a fox in a vineyard, stealing grapes and trampling over the vineyard. Only by cleansing evil people away can the work of the church proceed undisturbed, and the church life of the brothers and sisters carry on as normal. God is righteous and holy. Those saved by God all have good humanity and love the truth; God does not save evil people. The nature of evil people is that they are averse to the truth and hate the truth, and won't truly repent no matter how many chances they are given. While those who love the truth may reveal corrupt dispositions, cause some disruption and be somewhat judgmental, they can reflect on themselves afterward, repent and change. The church gave Li Jie plenty of chances before, but she never repented. In fact, she intensified her attacks on the leaders and deacons and her disruption of church life. She was an evil person by nature essence. She had to be cleared out based on the church's principles. As a church leader, I knew I'd have to fellowship with the brothers and sisters to expose her evildoing and sign the paperwork for clearing her out. However, when I thought about this I still felt reluctant. I was worried it would be the end for her if she really were cleared out from the church. I prayed to God as soon as I had these thoughts and asked Him to guide me to overcome the constraints of my feelings.

In my seeking, I read a passage of God's words: **"Who is Satan, who are demons, and who are God's enemies if not resisters who do not believe in God? Are they not those people who are rebellious against God? Are they not those who claim to have faith, yet who lack truth? Are they not those who merely seek to obtain blessings while being unable to bear witness for God? You still mingle with those demons today and treat them with conscience and love, but in this case are you not extending good intentions toward Satan? Are you not in league**

**with demons? If people have made it to this point and are still unable to distinguish between good and evil, and continue to blindly be loving and merciful without any desire to seek God's intentions or being able in any way to take God's intentions as their own, then their endings will be all the more wretched. Anyone who does not believe in the God in the flesh is an enemy of God. If you can bear conscience and love toward an enemy, do you not lack a sense of justice? If you are compatible with those which I detest and with which I disagree, and still bear love or personal feelings toward them, then are you not rebellious? Are you not intentionally resisting God? Does such a person possess truth? If people bear conscience toward enemies, love for demons, and mercy for Satan, then are they not intentionally disrupting God's work?"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. God and Man Will Enter Into Rest Together).

I felt very guilty when I read God's words. I was well aware that Li Jie was a troublemaker who disrupted the work of the church and would never repent, and that she was an evil person who was averse to the truth and hated the truth by her nature, but I still shielded and protected her, always wanting to keep her within the church. It meant I was enabling an evil person to disrupt the work of the church, standing on Satan's side and becoming the enemy of God. I was living by the satanic philosophy of "Man is not inanimate; how can he be free from emotions?" I'd always thought that personal relationships came first, and that only if one prioritized this would it show that one had normal humanity and was a good person. If I didn't do this, I would be seen as heartless and would be rejected by others. But that was ludicrous! Such philosophies for worldly dealings appear to be right, and they fit with human notions, but they go against the truth and the principles. Being emotionally attached and loving toward everyone else is foolish and misguided, and it's completely

unprincipled. God asks us to treat others with the truth principles, to be loving with the brothers and sisters, and to be conscientious with God. He asks that we reject evil people, disbelievers, demons, and Satans. Isn't it foolish and misguided to be emotionally attached to those kinds of people? Attachment of that kind lacks discernment and principle—it stems from foolishness. It doesn't just lead us astray, but it can also lead us to follow an evil person and harm the church's work. We can't just get lost in our feelings. We must have discernment concerning who we show love to and who we have to reject. We have to be principled in our emotional attachments. I saw I was living by satanic philosophies, and that it was so foolish and undignified. I clearly knew Li Jie wouldn't accept the truth, that she was an evil person who hated the truth and disturbed the church's work, and that she needed to be cleared out. But I was ruled by feelings. I shielded her over and over. It was painful and exhausting for me, with no respite, but most importantly I wasn't practicing the truths I clearly knew. I was ignoring my conscience, acting against principles, and indulging an evil person's disruption of the church's work. I was fighting against and betraying God! I was enjoying God's grace and salvation, but betraying Him, protecting Satan and shielding an evil person. I truly lacked conscience and humanity! It finally became clear to me that being ruled by feelings is to betray God and the truth. Then I thought of how, for so many years, God had been doing so much work in me and had paid such a great price. I hadn't given Him anything in return, and instead was standing on Satan's side against Him. I was filled with remorse and guilt when I thought about it that way.

I read a passage of God's words in my devotionals after that: **“By what principle do God's words ask that people treat others? Love what God loves, and hate what God hates: This is the principle that should be**

**adhered to. God loves those who pursue the truth and are able to follow His will; these are also the people that we should love. Those who are not able to follow God's will, who hate and rebel against God—these people are detested by God, and we should detest them, too. This is what God asks of man. ... During the Age of Grace, the Lord Jesus said, 'Who is My mother? And who are My brothers?' 'For whoever shall follow the will of My Father which is in heaven, the same is My brother, and sister, and mother.'** These words already existed back in the Age of Grace, and now God's words are even more clear: **'Love what God loves, and hate what God hates.'** These words cut straight to the point, yet people are often unable to grasp their true meaning" (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Only by Recognizing One's Own Misguided Views Can One Truly Transform). God's word helped clarify for me the principle of practice, **"Love what God loves, and hate what God hates."** Only those who truly believe in God, pursue the truth, and are devoted in their duty are brothers and sisters, and it is to them that we should show love. Those who do not accept the truth at all and consistently disrupt the work of the church, hate the truth and hate God by their nature, and they are all evil people, disbelievers, demons, and Satans. They are to be hated and rejected. Only treating people this way is principled and accords with God's intention. Later, in gatherings, I fellowshiped with the brothers and sisters on what an evil person is and how to discern an evil person, and I revealed all of Li Jie's evil behaviors. I also fellowshiped on the relevant principles for clearing out and expelling someone from the church, and once the brothers and sisters understood the truth, they exposed Li Jie's evildoing as well. Eventually she was cleared out from the church.

If it hadn't been for what God exposed and the judgment and revelation of His words, I would have continued to live by Satan's



philosophies. I would have been blindly affectionate and compassionate toward others, unable to tell good from evil or right from wrong, and standing on Satan's side and resisting God without realizing it. It was God's words that enabled me to see clearly the danger and consequences of relying on personal feelings in my actions, and helped me to avoid being constrained by feelings and to treat people according to the truth principles. I am grateful to God from the bottom of my heart for His love and salvation.

## **87. A Partner Isn't a Rival**

By Claire, Myanmar

Not long after I accepted God's work of the last days, I began to practice watering newcomers. Because I was enthusiastic, proactive and produced results in my duty, I was selected as group leader. Later, I became a gospel deacon. My brothers and sisters said that although I was young, I was quite reliable, I bore a burden in my duty, and I was responsible. This really satisfied my vanity. In October 2020, I became a church leader. This made me feel even more that I was someone capable, who pursued the truth.

After a while, an upper leader arranged for Sister Olivia to work with me. While I was introducing the situation of the church to her, the leader talked about some problems that existed in the church. After she heard about this, Olivia said, "We have to find the root of the problem and solve it quickly. Otherwise, it will hinder the work of the church." I felt ashamed when I heard her say this, because I worried Olivia would look down on me as these problems existed in my work. Over the next few days, Olivia got to know how the brothers and sisters did their duties in the church. Then, in front of several co-workers and my brothers and sisters she said to me, "The gospel deacon and several of the group leaders I met in the past two days don't bear a burden. When newcomers have notions and difficulties, the group leaders don't know how to resolve them and don't actively explore them, instead becoming mired in difficulties. They can't water the newcomers well like this." I felt a little resistant when I heard what she said because there were several group leaders I focused on cultivating. Hearing her speak about them like this made it seem like not one of them was working well. I felt like she might be demanding too much. I thought, "You

just arrived and don't understand the specifics of the situation, yet you've started picking at faults. Do you want to show that you bear a burden and can find problems? Are you just trying to make an impression because you're new here? If you keep digging into the problems of my work, won't you destroy my good image in the eyes of my brothers and sisters?" I held back my anger and said, "You're right about these problems. However, both the group leaders and the gospel deacon are facing actual difficulties, so sometimes the follow-up work isn't done well, and we have to show understanding." After hearing this, she said, "These difficulties can be resolved by fellowship on the truth. If they can accept the truth and understand God's intention, they will bear a burden and be responsible in their duty. The key is whether we fellowship on the truth to solve these problems." I became even more angry, thinking, "Are you saying I am not capable of solving these problems through fellowship of the truth?" My view of Olivia completely changed. I no longer thought of her as my partner or someone who could help me, but instead as my opponent. I thought, "If this continues, she will take the lead in work sooner or later. I am the leader, and she is just here to cooperate with me. She is better than me in every way, and always embarrasses me. How can I have any dignity like this? And what will my brothers and sisters think of me?" After that, I didn't want to work with her anymore, and I didn't want to talk to her.

Once, at a co-worker meeting, we read God's word revealing that false leaders do not do real work. Olivia reflected and shared her understanding of herself, saying she had been at the church for some time now, but because she hadn't done any real work, the newcomers' difficulties couldn't be resolved in time. She said this was causing them to constantly live with their difficulties, and that they didn't know how to practice the truth, which was delaying their growth in life. Although Olivia was discussing self-

knowledge, to me, it sounded like she was exposing me for not doing any real work. I began to guess at what she meant, “You’re talking about these problems to deliberately let everyone know about the problems in my work, aren’t you? The brothers and sisters had a good impression of me before, but now that you’ve exposed me like this, it’s like you’re deliberately damaging my image, isn’t it? What will they think of me now?” At the time, I was very resistant and wanted to leave, but I felt it was irrational to do so, so I forced myself to stay until the end. That evening, Olivia came to me to discuss who bore a burden that we could cultivate into a watering team leader. After she asked me this, I felt very resistant and thought, “Are there any suitable candidates left? You’ve rejected all the good ones. You openly discuss the problems that exist in our church not only here, but even in front of brothers and sisters from other churches. Now other churches know that I don’t do real work. Why don’t you consider my feelings before you speak? I think you’re deliberately targeting me!” I said sternly, “Ever since you came, no one else has borne a burden!” She answered me in a low voice, “So do you mean I shouldn’t be here?” I realized I was too impulsive, and shouldn’t have said that, so I immediately replied, “No.” We were both silent for a while before we continued discussing work. Later, when I thought about what I said to my sister, I felt a little guilty. The fact that Olivia had discovered problems in our work showed she could bear a burden. How could I speak to her like that? I wanted to apologize to her after the discussion was over, but as soon as I got busy with work, I forgot about it.

Later, when I saw the upper leader consult Olivia on all matters, I felt very uncomfortable: “I’m also a leader. What will my brothers and sisters think of me? Will they say I’m useless as a leader, and that I’m unnecessary?” I felt Olivia was stealing my limelight, and I was jealous of

her. I thought, “If she hadn’t come here, the leader would be discussing work with me.” I also thought about the fact that Olivia now dominated all the work, and she had believed in God for a long time and understood more truth than I did. She had also pointed out the problems in my work in front of my brothers and sisters, so I had no idea what my brothers and sisters thought of me now. When I thought about these things, I felt a sense of crisis. I was worried Olivia would steal my position. The more I thought about it, the more dissatisfied I became, and I had the desire to take revenge on her: “You don’t care about my feelings, so I won’t make things easy for you from now on.” I remember once, we were discussing work, and after Olivia expressed her opinion, she asked for my advice. I ignored her and found fault with her work arrangements, saying this wouldn’t work and that wouldn’t work to deliberately make things hard for her. Once, we were discussing a job that Olivia was mainly responsible for. At that time, I clearly understood how to solve the problem, but I didn’t want to make any suggestions. I even thought, “It’s better if your arrangements fail. That way, everyone will know you can’t handle things, and the leader will see it’s wrong to always talk to you instead of me.” After that, she made several suggestions, all of which I rejected. When I saw that she didn’t know how to solve it and wanted me to give her some advice, I secretly felt delighted, “You can’t even arrange work like this properly, and you still have the gall to point fingers at my work.” The leader saw that my behavior wasn’t right and reminded me that I had to work harmoniously with Olivia, otherwise the work of the church would be delayed. After hearing my leader’s words, deep down I felt a little guilty. When we were stuck in our work, I didn’t bear the burden to resolve it. Instead, I stood by and made fun. I wasn’t safeguarding the church’s work at all. After realizing this, I adjusted my

mentality and participated in discussions. But due to the previous delay, the work arrangements were carried out very late.

One night, the leader came to me to point out my problems. She said, “Your desire for prestige and status is too strong. You’ve been competing with Olivia for fame. When discussing work, you don’t accept any views she puts forward. You refute them all. Olivia feels constrained by you, and she doesn’t know how to cooperate with you. You need to do some self-reflection.” After hearing what my leader said, I felt very sad and aggrieved: “Why was Olivia reporting my problems behind my back? If she really wanted to help me, she could tell me in person. Now the leader knows about my problems and might dismiss me.” As soon as I thought of this, I opened up about my state with the leader. I even offered to accept responsibility and resign, so as not to keep delaying the work of the church. As I spoke about resigning, it nearly broke my heart. I felt like I was about to lose my duty. The leader fellowshiped with me and said, “When we have problems, we can’t avoid them. We need to seek truth and reflect on ourselves. The fact that Olivia can find problems in work shows that she can bear a burden. Isn’t this beneficial to the work of the church? Why can’t you treat it correctly? You are always jealous of her and afraid she will surpass you. This shows your desire for status is too strong.” After my leader’s fellowship, I realized that my desire for prestige and status really was too strong. I had to seek the truth to resolve my state. I could no longer feel negative and resistant.

After that, I read a passage of God’s words, and I gained some understanding of the corrupt disposition that I had shown. God’s words say: **“Antichrists think that whoever exposes them is simply giving them a hard time, so they compete and fight with anyone who exposes them. Due to this kind of nature of antichrists, they will never be kind to**

**anyone who prunes them, nor will they tolerate or put up with anyone who does so, much less will they feel gratitude or praise anyone who does so. On the contrary, if anyone prunes them and makes them lose dignity and face, they will harbor hatred for this person in their hearts, and will want to find an opportunity to take revenge on them. What hatred they have for others! This is what they think, and they will say openly in front of others, ‘Today you have pruned me, well, now our feud is written in stone. You go your way, and I’ll go mine, but I swear I’ll get my revenge! If you confess your fault to me, bow your head to me, or kneel down and beg me, I will forgive you, otherwise I will never let this go!’ No matter what antichrists say or do, they never see anyone’s kind pruning of them or anyone’s sincere help as the arrival of God’s love and salvation. Instead, they see it as a sign of humiliation, and as the moment when they were most shamed. This shows that antichrists do not accept the truth at all, that their disposition is one of being averse to and hating the truth”** (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Nine (Part Eight)). God revealed that when antichrists are pruned, they not only don’t accept it, but also start to hate the person who pruned them and want to retaliate. I saw that antichrists don’t accept the truth, they are averse to the truth, and they hate the truth. In the past, when I saw the word “revenge” I thought this approach was vicious. I didn’t believe I manifested viciousness and could do these types of things. Only antichrists and evil people would take revenge on others. I thought back to my own behavior, wasn’t it the same as the antichrists’? When Olivia pointed out the problems in my work in front of my co-workers, brothers and sisters, I felt that my image was damaged, so I developed a bias and resistance toward her. During a meeting, Olivia realized that she didn’t do real work based on God’s words, and I felt she was deliberately exposing problems in my work

by discussing her self-knowledge, so my bias against her only grew. I even attacked her, saying no one else bore a burden since she came. When I saw the leader always discussing work with her, I felt my limelight had been stolen. To retaliate against her, I didn't express my suggestions when we discussed work, and when Olivia expressed her thoughts and suggestions, I found faults and denied her, which made it impossible for work to progress. I regarded my sister as a rival. To maintain my reputation and status, I could even attack and retaliate against her. Wasn't the disposition I revealed the same as the disposition of an antichrist? Beyond that, I thought about the fact that she was pointing out actual problems in my work. If I had sought the truth to reflect on myself and reverse the deviations, then the problems could have been quickly solved. That would have been beneficial to our work. But not only did I not accept it, I also wanted to retaliate against my sister. I really didn't deserve to be called a believer in God!

Later, I read two more passages of God's word that made me understand the essence and consequences of this behavior. God's words say: **"One of the main strains in the nature of antichrists is viciousness. What does 'viciousness' mean? It means that they have a particularly vile attitude regarding the truth—not only failing to submit to it, and not only refusing to accept it, but even condemning those who prune them. That is the vicious disposition of antichrists. Antichrists think that whoever accepts being pruned is vulnerable to bullying, and that people who are always pruning others are those who wish always to tease and bully people. So, an antichrist will resist whoever prunes them, and they will give that person a hard time. And whoever brings up an antichrist's deficiencies or corruption, or fellowships with them about the truth and God's intentions, or has them know themselves, they think that person is giving them a hard time and finds them**



displeasing. They hate that person from the bottom of their heart, and they will take revenge on them and make things hard for them. ... What sort of people are possessed of such a vicious disposition? Evil people. The fact is that antichrists are evil people. Therefore, it is only evil people and antichrists who are possessed of such a vicious disposition. When a vicious person is faced with any kind of well-intentioned exhortation, accusation, teaching or help, their attitude is not to be grateful or accept it humbly, but instead to become enraged from shame, and to feel extreme hostility, hatred, and to even retaliate” (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Nine (Part Eight)). “Antichrists consider their own status and reputation as more important than anything else. These people are not only deceitful, cunning, and wicked, but also extremely vicious. What do they do when they detect that their status is at risk, or when they lose their place in people’s hearts, when they lose these people’s endorsement and affection, when people no longer venerate and look up to them, and they have fallen into ignominy? They suddenly change. As soon as they lose their status, they become unwilling to perform any duty, everything they do is perfunctory, and they have no interest in doing anything. But this isn’t the worst manifestation. What is the worst manifestation? As soon as these people lose their status, and no one looks up to them, and no one is misled by them, out comes the hate, jealousy, and revenge. They not only have no God-fearing hearts, but also lack any shred of submission. In their hearts, furthermore, they are liable to hate God’s house, the church, and the leaders and workers; they long for the work of the church to run into problems or come to a standstill; they want to laugh at the church, and at the brothers and sisters. They also hate anyone who pursues the truth and fears God. They attack and mock anyone

**who is loyal in their duty and willing to pay a price. This is the disposition of the antichrists—and is it not vicious? These are clearly evil people; antichrists are in their essence evil people”** (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Nine (Part Two)). Seeing words like “**vicious**” and “**evil people**” was scary and distressing. I didn’t expect these words to apply to me. My image was damaged because Olivia pointed out the problems in my work. I attacked and retaliated against her, deliberately embarrassing her when discussing work, and picking at faults in her work arrangements. I didn’t even explain when I knew how to solve a problem she had in her work because I wanted to embarrass her and laugh at her. When the leader exposed and pruned me, I not only didn’t reflect on myself, but also hated her for reporting my problems. I was negative and resistant, took out my anger on my duty, and even wanted to resign and stop doing my duty. What I manifested was the same as an antichrist, a vicious disposition! What I believed in were “I will not attack unless I am attacked” and “If you are unkind to me, I’ll do wrong to you.” When anyone affected my interests and image, I hated them, attacked them, and retaliated against them. I recalled a time before I believed in God, when I had a conflict with a friend, and she spoke badly about me to someone else. I got very angry, and I thought, “If you are unkind to me, I’ll do wrong to you.” I surreptitiously said to that same other person, “How can you be so stupid? What are you doing being so kind to her? You don’t even know that she’s saying bad things about you behind your back!” I thought I was weak if I didn’t strike back after being bullied. Living by these philosophies made me selfish and vicious, distorted my thinking, and made me unable to discern good and evil. Recognizing this, I felt I was terrible. If I didn’t deal with my viciousness, I could only do more evil, and then I would be spurned and eliminated by God! I prayed to God silently, “God, through the judgment

and revelation of Your word I can see my humanity is poor and I am quite vicious. I want to repent and practice the truth to change myself. Please guide me.”

Later, in God’s word, I read: **“When anyone spends a little time supervising or observing you, or gets to understand you on a deep level, trying to have a heart-to-heart with you and find out what your state has been like during this time, and even sometimes when their attitude is a little harsher, and they prune, discipline, and reproach you a bit, this is all because they have a conscientious and responsible attitude toward the work of the house of God. You should not have any negative thoughts or emotions toward this. What does it mean if you can accept it when others supervise, observe, and try to understand you? That, in your heart, you accept the scrutiny of God. If you do not accept people’s supervision, observation, and attempts to understand you—if you push back against all this—are you able to accept the scrutiny of God? The scrutiny of God is more detailed, in-depth, and accurate than when people try to understand you; God’s requirements are more specific, exacting, and in-depth. If you cannot accept being supervised by God’s chosen people, are your claims that you can accept God’s scrutiny not empty words? For you to be able to accept God’s scrutiny and examination, you must first accept being supervised by the house of God, the leaders and workers, or the brothers and sisters”** (The Word, Vol. 5. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers (7)). **“No matter what problems you have or what corruption you reveal, you should always reflect on and know yourself in the light of God’s words or ask brothers and sisters to point these things out to you. What is most important is that you should accept God’s scrutiny, come before God, and ask Him to enlighten and illuminate you. No matter what**

**method you use, discovering problems early and then resolving them is the effect achieved by self-reflection, and this is the best thing you can do. You must not wait until God has revealed and eliminated you before you feel remorse, as it will be too late to regret!”** (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Seven: They Are Wicked, Insidious, and Deceitful (Part One)). Only after reading God’s words did I realize that the supervision and guidance that my brothers and sisters give me is only because they are serious and responsible about the work. I should accept it from God and learn to accept and obey. Only this is accepting God’s scrutiny and having a heart that fears God. When my sister discovered my problems and pointed them out to me, this was meant to help and assist me. My life experience was too shallow. The newcomers had problems in their duties, but I couldn’t fellowship on the truth to solve them, and many times, I simply arranged work to get it finished and left it at that, without later follow-up or assistance. The work hadn’t achieved any results. I didn’t grasp the principles of arranging personnel and the unsuitability of some people was hard to avoid. Olivia understood some truth and could see some matters clearly, so if we had cooperated in church work, it wouldn’t just have helped the work, but I also could have learned from her and improved. Only then did I understand why God required us to cooperate in our duties, rather than doing them alone. It is because people have corrupt dispositions and many faults. We need to supervise each other, guide each other, and help each other. This is the only way to avoid mistakes. Thinking of this, I felt especially guilty. I could no longer live for prestige and status. I had to learn to let go of myself, accept the supervision and guidance of others, cooperate with my sister, seek the truth and solve problems at work together, and properly perform my duty.

After that, I was sent to another church to do my duty. Being separated from Olivia, I felt I had many regrets. So, I silently prayed to God, saying

from now on, I wanted to properly do my duty and focus on fixing my corrupt dispositions. Once, I asked Sister Esther, who was in charge of watering, to explain how the newcomer gatherings were going. Esther gave me some advice, “You always go to other gatherings, and rarely come to newcomer gatherings, which makes it seem as though the leader is absent. None of the brothers and sisters know you. It is not easy for you to follow up on their work, or resolve their states and difficulties.” Hearing her say that left me stunned, and I felt my cheeks burning red. I thought, “How can you call me an absent leader? Don’t you mean to say that I don’t do actual work and that I’m useless? You’re too harsh! It’s not like I’m not working, I’m following up on other work. Since you’re in charge of this group, you should be responsible for it. It doesn’t have to be me who does everything. If the upper leaders hear your words, won’t they think I don’t do actual work? This won’t do. I need to find some deviations in your work to talk about.” When I thought that, I realized my state was incorrect. My sister was pointing out problems in my work, and instead of accepting and reflecting, I thought she was too harsh, and wanted to find problems in her work to refute her. I was refusing to accept the truth and trying to retaliate again. I immediately silently prayed to God, “God, Esther pointed out an issue to me and I was resistant in my heart, which goes against Your intention. I wish to accept, obey and reflect on myself.” After I prayed, I reflected and realized that I actually did have a problem. I was very dependent on Esther. I felt that with her in charge of watering newcomers, I could relax, so I took a hands-off approach. As a church leader, I seldom got to know the real states and difficulties of the newcomers. I wasn’t fulfilling my responsibilities. This really was a manifestation of not doing actual work. After that, I said to Esther, “I didn’t realize this problem existed before, but I want to change it.” Later, I got in real touch with the

newcomers and attended their gatherings and offered fellowship to resolve their states. Doing my duty this way, I felt very at ease.

Through this experience, I realized that by practicing according to God's word and learning to accept my brothers and sisters' supervision, guidance, and pruning, I could genuinely achieve some change. Thanks be to God!

## **88. Why Am I Afraid of Being Outdone?**

By Rena, the Philippines

In June 2019, I accepted God's new work, and after a while, I started watering newcomers. Some newcomers thanked me a lot after I helped them, so I was very proud, and felt that I was well suited to watering work. Later, I took on another newcomer, and initially I watered and supported her diligently. I discovered that she understood things well, progressed very quickly, and that the experiential understanding she fellowshiped on at gatherings was good. I felt that she would quickly surpass me, and that when that happened, the leader would ask her to water all the other brothers and sisters, and I would no longer be needed. When this occurred to me, I didn't want to water her properly anymore, so I only discussed a few external things with her. One time, the leader asked me about her, saying, "We need more waterers right now, do you think that she's suitable for cultivation?" I didn't want her to be cultivated, because her caliber was so good, and I feared that she would become a church leader in the future and hold a higher position than me. So I told the leader, "I lack discernment on this. Maybe you can look into it more." When I heard that the leader had gone to speak with her, I felt very jealous and afraid. I often thought to myself, "Maybe she'll get cultivated and promoted, and even take my place." At that time, the church was partitioned, so we were in different churches. A few months later, I learned that she had become a church leader. Although I congratulated her and said that I was happy for her, deep down, I was jealous of her. I thought to myself: "How did she become a leader so fast, while I'm still a waterer?" I was very upset and I started working hard to water the newcomers, because I wanted to prove to my leader that I was fit to be a church leader too.

Later on, I was also elected as a church leader, but I still felt jealous when I saw that others were better than me. One time, I was discussing how to support and help newcomers with the other leaders and deacons, and the gospel deacon shared her thoughts on the matter. The upper leader thought that her ideas were good, as did the group leaders, so we tried supporting and watering the newcomers according to her suggestions. It was very effective and the newcomers were all really willing to come to gatherings and take up duties. This made me a little jealous, and I thought, “The gospel deacon is better than me. I have to improve myself and learn more.” Later, I asked her how long she had been doing her duty, and I was very shocked when she told me that it had only been six months. I felt really ashamed—it had been two years since I had accepted Almighty God’s work, and I had been a believer longest out of everyone in the group, but I was still like a beginner who lacked ideas. After that, I always compared myself to her. When I saw that she was competent at her work, that she always had good methods and paths for carrying out different kinds of church work and got results, I envied her even more. I thought, “If she keeps getting such great results in her work, and always comes up with good ideas during work discussions, the upper leader will see that she’s competent and that she has good caliber, and she’ll train her to be a church leader. Won’t that mean that she’ll take my place?” Once, she didn’t come to a gathering because she was busy with other work, and she asked me afterward what we had learned at the gathering. I really didn’t want to tell her, so I just said that I had forgotten. Later on, I noticed that the upper leader often fellowshiped with her, but rarely did so with me, and this made me very angry. I thought, “If you don’t talk to me, then I won’t do my duty!” At the time, I wanted to change to a duty where I could be looked up to by others. I thought that if I could preach the gospel effectively, the brothers and sisters might think



highly of me, so I started preaching the gospel and pushed the work of watering newcomers to one side. The upper leader sent me a reminder that I needed to understand and solve the difficulties of newcomers promptly, and I replied, “Sure, I’ll talk to them later.” But I only cared about preaching the gospel, and I didn’t contact the newcomers at all. Their problems weren’t resolved in time, and they stopped gathering normally. Before long, the upper leader sent me a message to ask why the newcomers weren’t gathering and whether I had encountered some difficulties, and I told her about my situation. She fellowshiped with me, “You are the church leader, and you are responsible for all the work of the church, especially watering newcomers. This work is very important. You can’t be perfunctory or muddle through it.” I cried after hearing that. I felt very wronged that she hadn’t noticed my efforts to preach the gospel at all.

Later, I began to reflect on the attitude I had toward my duty. The whole time, I had been worrying that the newcomers would be better than me, and not wanting them to surpass me. In order to maintain my status, I hadn’t watered the newcomers properly—especially those with good caliber. I also hadn’t encouraged them to do their duties. I wasn’t fulfilling my responsibilities at all. I thought of God’s words: **“Some people always fear that others are better than they are or above them, that other people will be recognized while they get overlooked, and this leads them to attack and exclude others. Is this not a case of being envious of people with talent? Is that not selfish and despicable? What kind of disposition is this? It is maliciousness! Those who only think about their own interests, who only satisfy their own selfish desires, without thinking about others or considering the interests of God’s house, have a bad disposition, and God has no love for them”** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Freedom and Liberation Can Be Gained Only by Casting Off

One's Corrupt Disposition). **“Right now, all of you perform your duties full-time. You are not constrained or tied down by family, marriage, or wealth. You have already emerged from those things. However, the notions, imaginings, knowledge, and personal intents and desires that fill your head remain completely intact. So, when it comes to anything that involves reputation, status, or an opportunity to shine—when you hear that the house of God plans to nurture various kinds of talented individuals, for example—every one of your hearts leaps in anticipation, each of you always wants to make a name for yourself and to step into the spotlight. You all want to fight for status and reputation. You are ashamed of this, but you would feel bad if you don't do so. You feel envy, hatred, and make complaints whenever you see someone stand out, and think that it is unfair: ‘Why can't I stand out? Why do other people always get the spotlight? Why is it never my turn?’ And after you feel resentment, you try to repress it, but you cannot. You pray to God and feel better for a while, but when you encounter this sort of situation again, you still cannot overcome it. Is this not a manifestation of an immature stature? When people are caught in such states, have they not fallen into Satan's trap? These are the shackles of Satan's corrupt nature that bind humans”** (The Word, Vol. 3.

The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Freedom and Liberation Can Be Gained Only by Casting Off One's Corrupt Disposition). God's word precisely revealed my state. I hated when others were better than me or surpassed me. When I met newcomers who understood things well and had good caliber, I feared that they would surpass me and take my place, so I didn't want to water them properly, or want the leader to cultivate them. Particularly when I worked with the gospel deacon, and saw that her preaching was effective, that she always made good suggestions, and that the upper leader always went to her to

discuss work, I envied her, secretly compared myself to her, and wanted to make the upper leader value me by preaching the gospel. I only thought about my own status and the high opinion of others. I wasn't fulfilling my responsibilities as a leader at all. I felt very ashamed. I was supposed to water the newcomers properly so that they could quickly lay a foundation on the true way, but I hadn't given any consideration to God's intentions. I had only thought of my own reputation and status and I hadn't diligently watered and supported the newcomers, which resulted in them not attending gatherings normally. I was doing evil! I began to reflect on what goal I was pursuing in my duty. Was I doing my duty to satisfy God or for my own interests? If I had been thinking of the work of the church and trying to satisfy God, then I would have wanted to train more people to perform duties. But I hadn't done that. Instead, I had envied and suppressed talented people, hoping that the leader wouldn't notice them. I realized that I had been doing my duty entirely for the sake of my own position and interests. I was so selfish!

Later, after a sister learned about my state, she sent me a passage of God's word: **"Some people believe in God but do not pursue the truth. They always live by the flesh, coveting fleshly pleasures, always sating their own selfish desires. No matter how many years they believe in God, they will never enter into the truth reality. This is the mark of having brought shame to God. You say, 'I haven't done anything to resist God. How have I brought shame upon Him?' All of your ideas and thoughts are wicked. The intents, goals, and motives behind what you do, and the consequences of your actions always satisfy Satan, make you its laughingstock, and allow it to get something on you. You have borne none of the testimony that a Christian should. You are of Satan. You bring shame to God's name in all things and you do not**

**possess genuine testimony. Will God remember the things that you have done? In the end, what conclusion will God draw about all of your actions, behavior, and the duties that you have performed? Does something not have to come of that, some sort of statement? In the Bible, the Lord Jesus says, ‘Many will say to Me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, and in Your name have cast out devils, and in Your name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess to them, I never knew you: depart from Me, you that work iniquity’ (Matthew 7:22–23). Why did the Lord Jesus say this? Why did so many of those who preached, cast out demons, and performed many miracles in the name of the Lord become evildoers? It was because they did not accept the truths expressed by the Lord Jesus, they did not keep to His commandments, and they had no love for the truth in their hearts. They only wanted to exchange the work they had done, the hardships they had endured, and the sacrifices they had made for the Lord for the blessings of the kingdom of heaven. In this, they were attempting to strike a deal with God, and they were trying to use God and trick God, so the Lord Jesus was sickened by them, hated them, and condemned them as evildoers. Today, people are accepting the judgment and chastisement of God’s words, but some still pursue reputation and status, and always wish to distinguish themselves, always wanting to be leaders and workers and to gain reputation and status. Although they all say that they believe in God and follow God, and they renounce and expend for God, they do their duties to obtain fame, gain, and status, and they always have their own schemes. They are not submissive or loyal to God, they can run amok doing evil without reflecting on themselves at all, and so they become evildoers. God loathes these evil people, and God does not save them” (The Word, Vol.**

3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Freedom and Liberation Can Be Gained Only by Casting Off One's Corrupt Disposition). Reading this passage of God's word touched me deeply. The evildoers that God speaks of aren't nonbelievers. They are people who believe in God, who follow God, expend themselves for God, who go to preach the gospel and work in various places, and suffer some hardship, but they do their duties for the sake of their own prestige and status, to be looked up to by others, or to obtain rewards and a crown. They aren't capable of being loyal to God, and they can't practice the truth and submit to Him, so the Lord Jesus said: **"Depart from Me, you that work iniquity"** (Matthew 7:23). I thought about how I'd believed in God for two years, given up my studies to do my duty in the church, and suffered and paid a price, and yet my intent had never been to satisfy God. I just wanted to be the best in the church, and to make the brothers and sisters and the leader think highly of me. That's why I worked so hard to distinguish myself. Everything I had done was to satisfy my own desires, and I had been living in a corrupt satanic disposition. None of the things that I had done were good deeds—they were evil deeds. I had been performing my duty with the wrong intent and motivation, which would only invoke God's disgust and hatred. If I kept going on like that, I would only be spurned by God. When I recognized this, I felt afraid. I wanted to repent, and to not be jealous of my brothers and sisters anymore, so I prayed to God to ask for His guidance.

One day, I found the courage to open up about my corruption to the leader. Instead of rebuking me, she fellowshiped about her own experience to help me. She also sent me a passage of God's words: **"As a church leader, you do not merely need to learn to use the truth to resolve problems, you also need to learn to discover and cultivate people of talent, whom you absolutely must not envy or suppress. Practicing in**

**this way is beneficial to the work of the church. If you can cultivate a few pursuers of the truth to cooperate with you and do all the work well, and in the end, you all have experiential testimonies, then you are a qualified leader or worker. If you are able to handle everything according to the principles, then you are committing your loyalty. ... If you are truly capable of showing consideration for God's intentions, you will be able to treat other people fairly. If you recommend a good person and allow them to undergo training and perform a duty, thereby adding a person of talent to God's house, will that not make your work easier? Will you not then be showing loyalty in your duty? That is a good deed before God; it is the minimum conscience and reason that those who serve as leaders should possess. Those who are capable of putting the truth into practice can accept God's scrutiny in the things they do. When you accept God's scrutiny, your heart will be set straight. If you only ever do things for others to see, and always want to gain others' praise and admiration, and you do not accept God's scrutiny, then is God still in your heart? Such people have no God-fearing hearts. Do not always do things for your own sake and do not constantly consider your own interests; do not consider the interests of man, and give no thought to your own pride, reputation, and status. You must first consider the interests of God's house, and make them your priority. You should be considerate of God's intentions and begin by contemplating whether or not there have been impurities in the performance of your duty, whether you have been loyal, fulfilled your responsibilities, and given it your all, as well as whether or not you have been wholeheartedly thinking about your duty and the work of the church. You must consider these things. If you think about them frequently and figure them out, it will be easier for you to perform your**

**duty well. If you are of poor caliber, if your experience is shallow, or if you are not proficient in your professional work, then there may be some mistakes or deficiencies in your work, and you may not get good results—but you will have done your best. You do not satisfy your own selfish desires or preferences. Instead, you give constant consideration to the work of the church and the interests of the house of God. Though you may not achieve good results in your duty, your heart will have been set straight; if, on top of this, you can seek the truth to solve the problems in your duty, you will be up to standard in the performance of your duty, and, at the same time, you will be able to enter into the truth reality. This is what it means to possess testimony”** (The Word, Vol. 3.

The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Freedom and Liberation Can Be Gained Only by Casting Off One’s Corrupt Disposition). God’s word states the principles of practice very clearly. As a church leader, one must put the work of the church first. When they adopt the right attitude, it is easier for them to do their duty well. I also understood that having faith in God means considering God’s intention in everything, accepting God’s scrutiny, and not taking into account what other people think. If I wanted to satisfy God and become a competent leader, I had to give up my status, reputation, and interests. I had to find talented newcomers worth cultivating, and help them to do their duties and prepare good deeds. That was the only way for me to fulfill my duty. God is fair to everyone. He does not look at our caliber or our status, He looks at whether we can pursue and practice the truth. If I did my duty according to God’s requirements and the truth principles, and always considered how to do my work in a way that benefited the church’s work, then even if my caliber was a little poor, God would still enlighten and guide me to perform my duty well. After I understood God’s intention, I prayed to God to repent

and say that I was willing to rebel against the flesh, practice the truth, and fulfill my duty to satisfy Him.

After that, more and more newcomers began accepting God's work in the last days, and the leader asked me to train more watering staff. I started to worry again that the newcomers I cultivated would take my place, and that the leader wouldn't value me anymore. Then I realized that I shouldn't keep thinking of my pride and status, and that I had to consider the work of the church. I prayed to God and recalled some of His words: **"As a church leader, you do not merely need to learn to use the truth to resolve problems, you also need to learn to discover and cultivate people of talent, whom you absolutely must not envy or suppress. Practicing in this way is beneficial to the work of the church. If you can cultivate a few pursuers of the truth to cooperate with you and do all the work well, and in the end, you all have experiential testimonies, then you are a qualified leader or worker. If you are able to handle everything according to the principles, then you are committing your loyalty"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Freedom and Liberation Can Be Gained Only by Casting Off One's Corrupt Disposition). As a church leader, it was my responsibility to train newcomers to perform their duties, and it was the responsibility and obligation of every believer to do a duty. I needed to cultivate more newcomers into waterers. More and more newcomers were coming to accept Almighty God, and if I didn't cultivate anyone to water them, then the newcomers wouldn't be watered promptly, their life entry would suffer, and the work of the church would also be affected. So I chose four newcomers who understood things well, trained them to be group leaders, and let them take turns hosting gatherings. I also frequently reminded them and helped them to water the other newcomers. By cooperating like this, not only were the newcomers watered quickly, I also



had more time to focus on the overall work of the church, and the effectiveness of the work gradually improved. I was very happy to see the newcomers make progress little by little and begin performing their duties. I felt at ease, and I gained a little more understanding of God's words. It's just like God's words say: **"If you recommend a good person and allow them to undergo training and perform a duty, thereby adding a person of talent to God's house, will that not make your work easier? Will you not then be showing loyalty in your duty? That is a good deed before God; it is the minimum conscience and reason that those who serve as leaders should possess"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Freedom and Liberation Can Be Gained Only by Casting Off One's Corrupt Disposition). It is entirely because of God's words that I have gained this understanding, and have some practice and entry in my duty. Thank God!

## **89. The Reflections of a “Good Leader”**

By Rubylen, the Philippines

Since I was a child, my parents taught me to be friendly with people, and to be an approachable and empathetic person. If people around me had problems or shortcomings, I wasn't supposed to expose them directly, I had to think about their pride. Because of this education, I never got into any conflicts or disputes with anyone, and the people around me thought that I was a good person and wanted to associate with me. I thought that this was a good way to behave too. After I started believing in God, I interacted with my brothers and sisters in the same way. Especially after becoming a church leader, I believed that I should be friendly to the brothers and sisters and not accuse others of mistakes lightly. That way, I wouldn't ruin the good relationship I had with them, and the brothers and sisters would want to interact with me, and praise me as an amiable and good leader.

Later on, I found that a group leader, Sister Joan, wasn't bearing a burden in her duty and that she didn't do any actual work. I reminded her many times, “As a group leader, you should care about and understand the states of your brothers and sisters and follow up on their work.” But she still didn't do as I'd told her, so I had to remind her again and ask her why. She said she only had an hour of free time, but she used it to go on Facebook and watch movies, so she hadn't followed up on any of the work. After hearing this, I was very angry, and I thought, “You are so lazy, and bear no burden at all. Some brothers and sisters aren't attending gatherings and you're not thinking of ways to support them.” I wanted to prune her for muddling through her duty and being irresponsible, but then I thought that it might make her distance herself from me and say I wasn't a good and approachable leader. I didn't want to ruin our harmonious relationship, so

instead of pruning her, I tried to encourage her. I said, “You can use this hour of free time to try to understand the states of your brothers and sisters, and then you can do your duty well.” After being told this, she did better for a few days, but was soon back to her old ways. Because she muddled through her duty, more and more newcomers stopped attending gatherings regularly, and some newcomers stopped coming altogether. I was really angry. She was so irresponsible! I really wanted to prune her, but I also worried that she would distance herself from me, so I didn’t say anything, and I had to water and support those newcomers myself. After I spoke to them, I found out that they weren’t coming to gatherings because they had many difficulties that hadn’t been resolved, but Joan had told me before that they just didn’t reply to messages. After seeing Joan’s careless attitude toward her duty, I really wanted to prune her and let her know that her irresponsibility in her duty had led to such serious consequences. But I also wanted to be a good leader who was amiable and approachable, so I changed my mind, and again just said a few things to encourage her. As a result, she still didn’t change. At one gathering, Joan complained, “I’ve been in this group a long time. Why haven’t I been promoted?” After hearing this, I thought, “You’re so lazy, you muddle through your duty, and you’re irresponsible. How could you possibly be promoted?” Although I was mad at her, I comforted her, saying, “In any duty we perform, we do so because of God’s sovereignty and arrangements. Although our duties are different, we are all watering newcomers.” I thought this would make her feel that I understood her and cared for her, and that I was a good leader. And just like that, when I was faced with my brothers’ and sisters’ problems, I never exposed or pruned them. Instead, I said some nice things to comfort and encourage them. I thought doing this would preserve my good, approachable image in everyone’s hearts.

Another time, the gospel deacon, Edna, and a group leader named Anne weren't cooperating harmoniously. Edna said to me angrily, "Anne is too lazy! When I asked her about the states and difficulties of the brothers and sisters in her group, she took a long time to respond. This meant I wasn't able to understand the situation quickly. She doesn't do her duty well!" I knew Edna had a rather arrogant disposition, and she spoke with a tone that was like that of an order or a demand, which others found hard to accept. Anne was quite proud and it was likely that she couldn't stand Edna's tone, and that was why she didn't want to reply. I wanted to point this out to Edna, but I also didn't want her to feel hurt or that I didn't understand her, so I told her in a friendly way, "Maybe Anne was busy and didn't see your message." After that, I went to Anne, and Anne said unhappily, "Edna is too arrogant! She always makes demands of me, so I don't want to reply to her messages." When I saw that she wouldn't take advice from others, I wanted to caution her about this, but I was worried she wouldn't accept it, and that it would destroy the harmony between us, so I said, "Maybe you misunderstood Edna. She just wants you to do your duty well." Just like that, I only spoke words of comfort and exhortation to them and didn't point out their problems. Neither of them understood themselves, Edna still had no way of following up on Anne's work, and Anne believed that she had been wronged, to the extent that she felt unable to perform her duty. I knew that I hadn't fulfilled my responsibilities as a leader, that was why they weren't aware of their own problems. I had caused that to happen. I prayed to God, asking Him to enlighten me so that I could know myself.

One day, I read in God's words: **"Practicing the truth is not about saying empty words or shouting slogans. Rather it is about how, no matter what people encounter in life, as long as it involves the principles of human conduct, their perspectives on things, or the**

**matter of performing their duties, they are faced with making a choice, and they should seek the truth, search for a basis and principles in God's words, and then find a path of practice. Those who can practice in this way are people who pursue the truth. To be able to pursue the truth in this way no matter how great the difficulties one encounters is to walk the path of Peter, the path of pursuing the truth. For example: What principle should be followed when it comes to interacting with others? Perhaps your original viewpoint is that 'Harmony is a treasure; forbearance is brilliance,' and that you should keep on everyone's good side, avoid causing others to lose face, and offend no one, thereby achieving good relations with others. Constricted by this viewpoint, you keep silent when you witness others doing bad things or violating the principles. You would rather that the work of the church suffers losses than offend anyone. You seek to stay on everyone's good side, no matter who they are. You think only about human sentiments and saving face when you speak, and you always speak nice-sounding words to please others. Even if you discover that someone has problems, you choose to tolerate them, and just talk about them behind their back, but to their face you keep the peace and maintain your relationship. What do you think of such conduct? Is it not that of a people pleaser? Is it not pretty slippery? It violates the principles of human conduct. Is it not lowly to conduct yourself in such a manner? Those who act like this are not good people, this is not a noble way to conduct oneself. No matter how much you have suffered, and no matter how many prices you have paid, if you conduct yourself without principles, then you have failed in this respect, and your conduct will not be recognized, remembered, or accepted before God'' (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. To Perform One's Duty Well, One Must at Least Be Possessed of a Conscience and Reason). After**

contemplating God's words, I understood that practicing the truth means acting according to the truth principles no matter what happens, and not being afraid to offend people. And yet, when I interacted with my brothers and sisters, I always wanted to leave them with a positive impression and maintain harmony between us. I strove to be an approachable and empathetic leader to win their praise, but I didn't focus on practicing the truth. When I saw Joan watering newcomers without bearing a burden and being lazy, I wanted to prune her for being irresponsible, but in order to maintain a good relationship with her and make her think that I was a good and approachable leader, I didn't expose her problem. As a result, because of her irresponsibility, some newcomers' problems went unresolved and they didn't come to gatherings. With Edna and Anne, I saw that they weren't cooperating harmoniously and didn't know themselves—I should have pointed out their problems and helped them understand themselves. This would have been beneficial to the work and would have helped with their life entry, but I just tried to smooth things over and gave them some words of comfort and exhortation. As a result, the two of them weren't performing their duties well. To maintain my image as a good leader who was amiable and approachable, I didn't protect the interests of the church at all. I preferred to let the work of the church suffer so that I could maintain my relationships with people. I was so selfish and despicable. I was a people pleaser and a deceitful person. The way I acted and conducted myself was entirely based on my corrupt disposition. I was not practicing the truth at all. Even if I was praised by others, I would never be commended by God. I didn't expose or point out the problems of my brothers and sisters, and I didn't fellowship on the truth to resolve them. This meant that they didn't recognize their own corrupt dispositions or perform their duties well, which affected the work of the church. I wasn't

helping the brothers and sisters to know themselves or progress in their life entry. Instead, I was protecting the image people had of me as a good leader, so that they would praise and look up to me, which is loathsome to God. When I recognized this, I felt very sad, so I prayed to God, asking Him to guide me in resolving my corrupt dispositions.

Later, after learning about my state, a sister sent me a passage of God's words: **"The essence behind good behavior such as being approachable and amiable can be described in one word: pretense. Such good behavior is not born of the words of God, nor as a result of practicing the truth or acting according to principle. What is it produced by? It comes from people's motives, schemes, from them pretending, putting on an act, being deceitful. When people cling to these good behaviors, the aim is to get the things they want; if not, they would never aggrieve themselves in this way, and live contrary to their own desires. What does it mean, to live contrary to their own desires? It is that their true nature is not as well-behaved, guileless, gentle, kind, and virtuous as people imagine. They do not live by conscience and sense; instead, they live in order to achieve a certain aim or demand. What is man's true nature? It is muddleheaded and ignorant. Without the laws and commandments bestowed by God, people would have no idea what sin is. Is this not what mankind used to be like? Only when God issued the laws and commandments did people have some concept of sin. But still they had no concept of right and wrong, or of positive and negative things. And how, with this being the case, could they be aware of the correct principles for speaking and acting? Could they know which ways of acting, which good behaviors, ought to be found in normal humanity? Could they know what produces truly good behavior, what kind of way they should follow to live out a human likeness? They**

could not. Because of people's satanic nature, because of their instincts, they could only pretend and put on an act to live decently, and with dignity—which is what gave rise to deceits such as being well-educated and sensible, gentle and refined, courteous, respecting the old and caring for the young, and being amiable and approachable; thus emerged these tricks and techniques of deception. And once they emerged, people selectively clung to one or several of these deceits. Some chose to be amiable and approachable, some chose to be well-educated and sensible, gentle and refined, some chose to be courteous, to respect the old and care for the young, some chose to be all of these things. And yet I define people with such good behaviors with one term. What is that term? 'Smooth stones.' What are smooth stones? It is those smooth stones in rivers that have been scoured and polished of any sharp edges by long years of passing water. And though they may not hurt to step on, without care people can slip on them. In appearance and shape, these stones are very beautiful, but once you have taken them home, they are quite useless. You can't bear to throw them away, but there is no point in keeping them, either—which is what a 'smooth stone' is. To Me, people with these apparently good behaviors are tepid. They pretend to be good on the outside, but do not accept the truth at all, they say nice-sounding things, but don't do anything real. They are nothing but smooth stones" (The Word, Vol. 6. On the Pursuit of the Truth I. What It Means to Pursue the Truth (3)). Before, I always felt that people who are approachable and amiable are good people, never expecting that satanic, corrupt dispositions and personal goals and intents lay behind this kind of "good" behavior. I had strived to be an approachable and amiable person since I was a child, and those around me all praised me for being empathetic, but actually, everything I did was to make others look up



to me and praise me. I used the apparently good behaviors of being approachable and amiable to blind and deceive my brothers and sisters. God characterizes people with this kind of “good” behavior as “smooth stones.” These stones look good on the outside, and it doesn’t hurt to step on them, but it’s very easy to slip on them and fall. They’re fine to look at, but they have no practical use. That’s who I was. I appeared to be approachable and amiable, and I would never hurt anyone, but I also offered no real help to my brothers and sisters. Instead, my heart was full of deceit and trickery. I got along with everyone and didn’t offend anybody. I was just a “smooth stone,” a people pleaser who always stuck to the middle ground, and a cunning hypocrite. It’s just as God’s word reveals: **“Those who walk the middle path are the most insidious people of all. They offend no one, they are smooth and slick, they are good at playing along in all situations, and no one can see their faults. They are like living Satans!”**

(The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Only by Practicing the Truth Can One Cast Off the Shackles of a Corrupt Disposition). I used to think that being approachable and amiable would make other people like me, and that God would approve of me too. Now I knew that my actions weren’t at all in line with the truth principles and God’s word. They were revelations of my deceitful disposition. People who act like this have no dignity or character, and God hates them. I knew that if I didn’t repent and change, one day I would be revealed and eliminated by God. I didn’t want to be that kind of person anymore. So, I prayed to God and repented. I asked Him to help me change my disposition, give me the strength to practice the truth, and be sincere with Him and my brothers and sisters.

One day, a sister sent me these words of God:

**What is the standard by which a person’s actions and behavior are judged to be good or evil? It is whether or not they, in their thoughts,**

**revelations, and actions, possess the testimony of putting the truth into practice and of living out the truth reality. If you do not have this reality or live this out, then without doubt, you are an evildoer.**

—The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Freedom and Liberation Can Be Gained Only by Casting Off One's Corrupt Disposition

**The responsibilities of leaders and workers:**

**1. Lead people to eat and drink of God's words and understand them, and to enter the reality of God's words.**

**2. Be familiar with the states of each sort of person, and resolve the various difficulties relating to life entry they encounter in their real lives.**

**3. Fellowship the truth principles that should be understood in order to perform each duty properly.**

**4. Keep abreast of the circumstances of supervisors of different work and personnel responsible for various important jobs, and promptly alter their duties or dismiss them as necessary, so as to prevent or mitigate losses caused by using unsuitable people, and guarantee the efficiency and smooth progress of the work.**

**5. Maintain an up-to-date grasp and understanding of the status and progress of each item of work, and be able to promptly resolve problems, correct deviations, and remedy flaws in the work so that it will progress smoothly.**

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—The Word, Vol. 5. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers (1)

After reading God's words, I understood that His standard for evaluating our humanity is not how many "good" behaviors we appear to engage in or how many people think highly of us. Instead, it is whether we can submit to God and whether in our thoughts and deeds we possess the testimony of putting the truth into practice. Only that kind of people have good humanity. I had seen Joan muddling through her duty and being irresponsible, as well as Edna and Anne living in their corrupt dispositions and mutual spite. Their actions had already taken a toll on the work of the church. As a church leader, I should have fellowshiped to help them, exposed, and dissected the nature of what they did, but instead I just said nice things to them and tried to be a peacemaker. Even as I saw the work of the church suffer, I was still just trying to maintain my good image. Not only did I not have testimony of practicing the truth, I had failed to fulfill my responsibilities as a church leader and hadn't helped the life entry of my brothers and sisters in the slightest bit. In the past, I'd believed that if I could live in harmony with my brothers and sisters and make them think I was approachable and amiable, then I was a good leader. In reality, that is a misapprehension, and it does not align with the requirements of God at all. That's because a good leader is someone who can practice the truth to protect the interests of the church, who can fellowship on the truth to resolve their brothers' and sisters' problems and difficulties, and lead them to enter the reality of God's word. Whereas I wasn't exposing or pointing out my brothers' and sisters' problems, or helping them to understand the truth and do their duties well. Instead, I played tricks to protect my own pride and image, I gave them words of comfort and exhortation, and didn't solve any actual problems. By doing so, I was fooling and deceiving my brothers and sisters. I realized then that to be a truly good leader, every one of my words and deeds had to be up to the standards of God's word, and

that if I didn't practice the truth, I'd be walking the road of resisting God. This is because God wants people who can act according to His words and requirements and not leaders who adhere to traditional cultural virtues, pursue the praise of others, and do not practice the truth. At that thought, I realized that I had to change the way that I interacted with people. I couldn't keep following philosophies for worldly dealings while interacting with the brothers and sisters or in performing my duty. Instead, I had to help my brothers and sisters resolve their problems and difficulties according to God's word, so that they could all perform their duties according to the truth principles. That was my responsibility. In God's word, I found a path of practice. So, I prayed to God, and asked Him to guide me in practicing the truth to resolve my corruption.

Later, I read something in God's word: **"What people should strive to achieve most is to make the words of God their basis, and the truth their criterion; only then can they live in the light and live out the likeness of a normal person. If you wish to live in the light, you should act according to the truth; you should be an honest person who says honest words and does honest things. What is fundamental is to have the truth principles in one's comportment; once people lose the truth principles, and focus only on good behavior, this inevitably gives rise to fakery and pretense. If there is no principle to people's comportment, then no matter how good their behavior is, they are hypocrites; they may be able to mislead others for a time, but they will never be trustworthy. Only when people act and comport themselves according to God's words do they have a true foundation. If they do not comport themselves according to God's words, and only focus on pretending to behave well, can they become good people as a result? Absolutely not. Good doctrines and behavior cannot change man's corrupt**

**dispositions, and they cannot change his essence. Only the truth and the words of God can change people's corrupt dispositions, thoughts, and opinions, and become their life. ... In some special instances, it becomes necessary to directly expose other people's errors and prune them, so that they gain knowledge of the truth and desire to repent. Only then is the due effect achieved. This way of practicing is of great benefit to people. It is a real help to them, and it is constructive for them, is it not?"** (The Word, Vol. 6. On the Pursuit of the Truth I. What It Means to Pursue the Truth (3)).

God's words pointed out the path for me to change my disposition. I needed to act and conduct myself according to God's words, and use the truth as my criterion. I had to stop disguising myself with apparently good behaviors, and I needed to practice the truth and become an honest person. When I saw things happening that went against the truth principles, or when I saw brothers and sisters performing their duties based on corrupt dispositions, I needed to be honest with them, and treat them according to principles. When someone needed to be helped through fellowship, I had to fellowship and help them; when something needed to be pointed out to someone, I had to point it out; when someone needed to be pruned, I had to prune them. Only by doing those things could the brothers and sisters realize that there were deviations in how they did their duties and turn things around in time. That was the only way to truly help them. I had to build my relationships with them on the foundation of God's word; that's how a normal relationship between people should be. After I understood the path to practice the truth, I told myself, "Don't be afraid to talk about the others' mistakes, and don't just say nice things to them all the time. God hates those who disguise themselves and deceive others. My words and deeds must accord with God's words and I should do things according to the truth principles." Later, when I saw Joan being lazy again, although I

still worried that I would lose my good image in her heart if I pointed it out to her directly, I thought back to the passages of God's word I had read before and realized that I was still following the idea of being approachable and amiable in how I behaved and conducted myself. I prayed to God, asking Him to guide me in practicing the truth. After that, I went to Joan and said to her, "Because you muddle through your duty and are irresponsible, many newcomers aren't coming to gatherings. Doing your duty like this really delays the life entry of newcomers and the work of the church." After pointing out her problem, I also fellowshiped on my own experiences. I thought she would get angry and ignore me, but what happened surprised me. Not only was she not angry, she also reflected on herself and said, "This is my shortcoming, and I need to change it." After that, Joan started to perform her duty diligently, and the newcomers she watered attended gatherings more regularly. Our relationship didn't break down because I had given her advice and helped her, it actually got better. Later on, when I saw her revealing some kind of corruption again, I just pointed it out to her directly, and she was able to accept my advice and know herself. Now, her attitude toward her duty has changed a lot, and she has been selected as church leader. I also pointed out Edna's and Anne's problems. Edna became aware of her arrogance and egotism, and said she had to change the way she talked to others. Anne also recognized her own corrupt disposition, and said she was willing to change. This made me very happy. Thank God! Only God's word can change people!

These experiences showed me that a truly good person is not, as people believe, someone with apparently good behaviors. It is someone who acts and conducts themselves by God's word, practices the truth, and is an honest person. This is the kind of person that God loves. I also realized that when I see problems in the brothers and sisters, I need to promptly

fellowship and help them, and expose and prune them when necessary. This is the only way to help people realize their own corruption and shortcomings, so they can then seek the truth to resolve their corruption and do their duties according to principles—it is the best way for me to help my brothers and sisters. Now I am no longer afraid of pointing out their problems. No matter what they may think of me, I will practice being an honest person, uphold the principles, and safeguard the work of the church. Thank God!

## 90. The Police Demand Cash

By Gao Hui, China

One day in July of 2009, a sister rushed to my house to tell me our church leader had been arrested and the police had seized a portion of the receipts issued for the church's money. Hearing this made me very anxious. My family held some of the church's funds, and the names of myself and my husband were on the receipt. If it was to fall into police hands, we would certainly be arrested and the money seized. So, we hastily transferred the church's money elsewhere.

A few days later, we were raided at home by a squad of more than 20 officers, led by the village public security chief. One of the officers held up a receipt and said: "Did you write this? Hand over the 250,000 yuan that you're holding, right away!" I panicked a bit when I saw the receipt, and immediately prayed to God: "Dear God, please give me faith and strength. I'll never be a Judas and betray You." After praying, I thought of God's words which say: **"Of everything that occurs in the universe, there is nothing in which I do not have the final say. Is there anything that is not in My hands?"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. God's Words to the Entire Universe, Chapter 1). I thought to myself: "All things are in God's hands, and I must rely on God to face up to this ordeal." Then the police officer demanded: "Who gave you these funds to hold? Hand over the money, now!" I was livid about this, thinking: "These funds are offerings to God from His chosen people. What have they got to do with you? Why on earth should I give them to you?" Seeing that we didn't answer, the officer grabbed my husband and slammed his head against the wall, again demanding where the money was. I was angry and distraught. My husband had health problems stemming from a serious car accident, and was in no



condition to take this kind of abuse. Then the public security chief said to the officer: "That one's not well. He could easily pass out." The officer reluctantly stopped, not wanting to risk his death. They then took me to another room, handcuffed me to a motor-scooter and began viciously interrogating me, "Where did you put the 250,000? If you tell us, then we won't arrest you and your reputation won't suffer. But if you don't tell us, you're in for it!" When I didn't respond, a dozen or so of the officers began frenetically searching the house. They rummaged through every cupboard, checked under the beds and even removed the backs from the TV and washing machine. Some of the officers crawled on the floor, tapping the tiles, while others spread out to tap on the walls. Wherever they heard a hollow sound, they would break open the surface to check. Before long, I heard an excited yell, "Found it! Found it!" and an officer ran over holding a bag of money. Then they started counting. There was 121,500 yuan in total. "It's our family savings," I told them, but they just ignored me. Since they still hadn't found all 250,000, they continued searching. They searched every little nook and cranny. They took apart the doghouse and smashed our marble table to pieces. Even the chimney on our roof was destroyed. They pulled up the flooring in several rooms and dug around the trees in the courtyard. I watched, helpless, as they turned the whole house upside down. I was infuriated, thinking: "Nothing's too low for the Communist Party in their effort to seize the church's money. What a bunch of demons!" At the same time, I was also worried. My husband had been unable to do heavy manual work since the car accident, and I'd become the main breadwinner. We'd been as frugal as possible in the years that followed, and had worked hard to save up that money. What were we supposed to do now that the police had taken it all? Our son was grown up and getting ready to marry. Now we didn't even have the money for his wedding. I really didn't know

how I would deal with this setback. All I could do was pray to God and ask for His guidance. After praying, I thought of when Satan tempted Job. Overnight, all of his livestock were stolen. The wealth he had accumulated over many years was gone, and his ten children all died. He broke out in sores over his whole body, but he never complained, and even said, “Jehovah gave, and Jehovah has taken away; blessed be the name of Jehovah” (Job 1:21). Having undergone these enormous trials, Job stood firm in his testimony and humiliated Satan. The crazed search of our house and seizure of our money was Satan’s temptation and assault on us. I needed to be like Job, relying on God and using my faith to get through this. No matter what, I wasn’t going to give up any information on the church’s funds. I had to stand firm in my witness for God.

The police continued searching until 2 or 3 a.m. the following morning. They tossed the place for seven hours but didn’t find any more money. My husband had been knocked unconscious and I was taken to the armed police reception center for interrogation. They brought me to a room where four or five menacing-looking plainclothes policemen were waiting, staring at me with evil grins. I was terrified and my hands trembled uncontrollably. I hurriedly prayed to God and asked that He give me faith. After praying, I thought of how Daniel was framed and thrown into a lions’ den, and yet, thanks to God’s protection, the lions didn’t eat him. All is in God’s hands. Satan may be cruel and vicious, but God sets its boundaries. They couldn’t harm me without God’s permission, so I just needed to rely on God and stand firm in my testimony. Then a political commissar from the public security bureau came in, holding a piece of paper. He told me to sign the paper without even saying what it was about. When I refused, he took up a foot-long plastic baton and started clubbing me on my hands and mouth. They began swelling up after just a few hits. Then he said to two of

the officers standing beside me: “Don’t let her sleep. After two days and nights she’ll break down and tell us everything.” Then he turned to me and threatened: “If you don’t tell us where the money is, I’ll have your house torn down!” This really worried me. “It took us so long to get our own home,” I thought, “and now the police have wrecked it in a matter of hours. They’re cruel and capable of anything. Are they really going to tear the place down if I don’t say where the church’s money is? Are they going to torture me to death?” The more I thought about it, the more scared I felt. I prayed continually to God, and then the words of the Lord Jesus came into mind: **“And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear Him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell”** (Matthew 10:28). God’s words gave me faith and courage. My life is in God’s hands. No matter how cruel the police might be, they could only ravage my flesh, and without God’s permission, they couldn’t do anything to me. If God permitted the police to take my life and destroy my house, I’d be willing to submit. After realizing this, I didn’t feel as scared. The officers then dragged me to a chair and handcuffed me to it. The second my eyes began to droop they’d kick me hard in the legs, and so I didn’t get any sleep that whole night.

The next morning, several officers took turns interrogating me on the whereabouts of the church’s money. Looking grave, the commissar asked: “What happened to the money you were holding? It says 250,000 on the receipt. Why was only some of it found? Where’s the rest of the money?” I lowered my head and didn’t say anything. He pressed on: “Did you spend the rest of the money? Tell me now!” I thought to myself: “We would never embezzle the church’s money. It’s offerings to God made by His chosen people. People that embezzle offerings to God are demons and will be cursed and punished in hell!” Then the commissar tried a softer tone, to

persuade me to give up the location of the money. He said: “You need to tell us promptly. As soon as you tell us, you can reunite with your family.” Then he said: “I was in the army over by where you live; we’re practically from the same town. Just tell us right now and we won’t have any problems.” I thought to myself: “These officers are extremely devious. I can’t fall for their tricks!” Then another officer asked me: “Weren’t you holding 250,000? There’s only 121,500 remaining. How many years do you think it’s going to take you to return the rest of the money to us? Just write a letter of guarantee and we’ll let you go home now. What do you say?” I was angry and resentful when I heard this. They’d stolen all our family’s money and expected me to give them an IOU? Absolutely shameful!

At around one in the morning, the police began interrogating me again, asking over and over about the whereabouts of the money. One of them said: “Do you know where this money came from? It’s the hard-earned money of the people, and it should be returned to the people.” The sight of his ugly face positively nauseated me. This money was earned by the hard work of God’s chosen people thanks to the grace of God, and then offered to Him. It stood to reason that these offerings were for God. It had nothing to do with the “hard-earned money of the people.” That was just a brazen lie! This performance by the CCP police allowed me to see their evil much more clearly. They disgusted me, and I despised them. I wanted to ignore them even more then. When I still wouldn’t talk, two officers took turns slapping me in the face, more times than I could count. When they got tired, they switched to hitting me with a plastic jotter. My head swam, my vision went blurry, and my face was stinging with the pain. Then they used an electric baton to zap me through my handcuffs. The current shot through my body and every nerve seemed to go numb. It felt worse than death. But they didn’t let up, kicking my legs with their hard shoes and stomping on

my feet with their heels. It was excruciating. I was completely drained by the beatings and torture, and my head was spinning like I was on the brink of death. I prayed ceaselessly to God, pleading that He give me the resolve to endure the suffering and stand firm in my testimony. After praying, a hymn of God's words titled **"How to Be Perfected"** came to mind: **"When you face suffering, you must be able to lay aside concern for the flesh and to not make complaints against God. When God hides Himself from you, you must be able to have the faith to follow Him, to maintain your previous love without allowing it to falter or dissipate. No matter what God does, you must submit to His design and be prepared to curse your own flesh rather than make complaints against Him. When you are faced with trials, you must satisfy God, though you may weep bitterly or feel reluctant to part with some beloved object. Only this is true love and faith"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Those Who Are to Be Made Perfect Must Undergo Refinement). Yes, indeed. My flesh suffered to a degree under torture, but God was perfecting my faith through this environment of suffering. No matter how the police tortured and brutalized me, I had to rely on God and stand firm in my witness for Him. Then the officer ordered me to stand, but I couldn't because I was handcuffed to the armrests of the chair. All I could do was bend at the waist, with the chair, which weighed over 30 pounds, hanging from my wrists. Then the officer gave the chair a vigorous shake, causing the handcuffs to bite deep into my wrists. It was incredibly painful. With a malicious smile he said: "This is your own fault, you can't blame us." I closed my eyes and tried to fight off the pain as their maniacal laughter rang throughout the room. How I despised that pack of demons.

By then, I'd been cuffed to the chair for a day and a night. My head was pounding and my back was aching. I felt like I was coming apart and I

didn't know how much more I could take. So I called out to God continually in my heart: "Dear God! I don't know how much longer I can hold on. Please give me faith and strength. No matter what hardship, I wish to stand firm in my witness." After praying, a passage of God's words came to mind: **"My work among the group of people of the last days is an unprecedented enterprise, and thus, so that My glory may fill the cosmos, all people must suffer the last hardship for Me. Do you understand My intention? This is the final requirement I make of man, which is to say, I hope that all people can bear strong, resounding testimony to Me before the great red dragon, that they can offer themselves up for Me a final time, and fulfill My requirements one last instance. Can you truly do this?"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. God's Words to the Entire Universe, Chapter 34). I could feel God's hope and encouragement through His words. It was in the midst of this hardship that I needed to bear testimony before Satan. I needed to endure the pain and suffering, stand firm in my testimony and humiliate Satan. With the guidance of God's words, I felt as though God was always with me. The pain seemed to diminish a little. After a night of beatings and torture, I was black and blue all over. My face was covered in bruises, my feet had swollen up, and I was in a very weak state. The officer working the next shift had seen enough and said: "These guys went way overboard. It's already hard enough for farmers to make a living, and now all their money's been taken from them."

On the third day, the commissar came to interrogate me again about my faith, as well as about the whereabouts of the 250,000 yuan. I said: "The 250,000 yuan was removed. The money you took was my family's." The commissar immediately turned to the person taking notes and said: "Don't write that down." I said: "Why not?" He rose angrily from his chair,

pounded the table and yelled: “Who’s doing the interrogation here? What’s the name of the person who took the money? Where did they go?” When I didn’t reply, he snarled: “If you don’t tell me now, I’ll see to it that your children never get a job. Your family will never survive this!” I was very worried by this. My children were still young. If the Communist Party deprived them of work, how would they fend for themselves in the future? After prayer, I thought of God’s words: **“The fate of man is controlled by the hands of God. You are incapable of controlling yourself: Despite man always rushing and busying himself on his own behalf, he remains incapable of controlling himself. If you could know your own prospects, if you could control your own fate, would you still be a created being?”**

(The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Restoring the Normal Life of Man and Taking Him to a Wonderful Destination). After pondering God’s words, I felt much calmer. My children’s future was in God’s hands, and the great red dragon had no say in the matter. I needed to rely on God and stand firm in my testimony. As for my children’s future and the life of my family, God had preordained all of that long ago. I was willing to submit to God’s orchestrations and arrangements.

On the fourth day they brought my son in with the public security chief. When my son saw my face all bruised and swollen, he started to cry and said: “Mom, don’t worry. We won’t hold the wedding now, and I’ll find a way to borrow some money to bail you out.” I felt awful when he said that, and shuddered inside. The commissar then instructed the public security chief that he too needed to work on getting the money issue resolved, before slyly adding: “Have they got relatives? Get their relatives to loan them some money.” The public security chief nodded and bowed, saying: “I’ll go back and talk to her brother and sister, and get her husband to figure something out.” Seeing how avaricious they were, I angrily said:

“I’m not in touch with my brother and sister. Don’t bring them into it.” Another of the officers yelled: “Doesn’t the receipt say 250,000? We only found 120,000, so you’re going to have to make up the difference either way.” I was up against a wall, so I said: “Then just sell our house.” The public security chief looked at me scornfully and said: “Your place isn’t worth much. Do you really think you can make up the difference by selling it?” When the officer heard this, he went back to bullying my son to borrow money. My son had no choice but to go along with it, and he left in tears. I was enraged, and thought: “The great red dragon is utterly despicable. They always claim they’re for religious freedom, but in reality they suppress, arrest and brutalize the faithful. They use whatever means they can to steal our money and plunder God’s offerings, leaving people destitute.” I saw clearly how the great red dragon is just a demon that resists God and brutalizes mankind. All of this strengthened my resolve to follow God until the very end. I couldn’t help but start singing a hymn in my head: “Through trials and tribulations, I finally awoke. I saw that Satan is despicable, cruel, and evil. Flames of rage were kindled in my heart. I pledged my life to rebel against the great red dragon and bear witness to God” (Follow the Lamb and Sing New Songs, I Pledge Loyalty Unto Death to Follow God). No matter how Satan brutalized me, I was going to stand firm in my witness and humiliate Satan.

In the next few days, they used different forms of torture. They cuffed me to a chair and didn’t let me sleep or eat, while they kept on demanding information about the money. My nerves were shredded, all the way through this. On the eighth day, when the commissar still couldn’t get an answer from me, he brought my son in again and told him they wouldn’t let me go until he’d raised 130,000 yuan. Looking troubled, my son said he hadn’t been able to borrow the money. I angrily said: “We’re simple farmers and my husband’s been unwell for years. How are we supposed to come up



with that kind of money?” The commissar ignored me, glared at my son, and said: “Go back and find a way.”

On the tenth day, they realized they weren’t going to get any valuable information from me, and let me go home. As I was leaving, they warned me to give them the rest of the 250,000 as soon as possible. They also said: “As for whoever asked you to hold the money, if you find them for us, we’ll give your money back to you.” I thought to myself: “They clearly know that the money they took is my family’s, not the church’s, and they’re just using it to coerce me into selling out my brothers and sisters. But that’s never going to happen.” Only later, I found out that my son had given the police over 80,000 yuan for my release.

We weren’t well off to start with, so when the police took our savings, our lives became even harder. I already suffered from hand tremor, and it got worse after being tortured by the police. I couldn’t even prepare a meal, let alone go out and work, and there was even less prospect of work for my husband. Without any source of income, we had barely enough money to buy vegetables, flour and daily necessities. One time, I wanted to buy toilet paper but had no money for it. The Communist Party had stripped us bare, leaving us with not enough to get by on. How were we supposed to live like that? Thinking about it made me depressed. On top of that, the police would call us every now and then to summon us. It got so that the sound of the phone triggered a nervous reaction in me. To make things worse, our relatives and friends avoided us like the plague so as not to be implicated. And people in the village were always judging us. I’d get anguished and depressed, feeling like I couldn’t take it anymore, and would go on my own into the fields for a cry. As I cried, I prayed to God, saying: “Dear God! I feel so weak in this situation and don’t know how I should get through it. I pray that You guide me and give me faith and strength.” After praying, I

thought of a passage of God's words: **"The path God guides us along does not go straight up, but is a winding road full of potholes; God says, furthermore, that the rockier the path is, the more it can reveal our loving hearts. Yet none of us can open up such a path. In My experience, I have walked many rocky, treacherous paths and I have endured great suffering; at times I have even been so utterly grief-stricken that I wanted to cry out, but I have walked this path to this day. I believe that this is the path led by God, so I endure the torment of all the suffering and continue onward. For this is what God has ordained, so who can escape it? I do not ask to receive any blessings; all I ask is that I am able to walk the path I ought to walk according to God's intentions. I do not seek to imitate others, walking the path that they walk; all I seek is that I may fulfill My devotion to walk My designated path until the end"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. The Path ... (6)). As I turned over God's words, tears streamed down my face. I realized that believing in and following God in a country ruled by the Communist Party is bound to bring all kinds of hardship and oppression. We may have lost our savings and been reduced to such difficult circumstances because of me being arrested and persecuted by the Party, but this too was permitted by God. I needed to submit and stand firm in my witness for God to humiliate Satan throughout this hardship.

In the days that followed, my husband and I gave each other support and encouragement, often singing hymns together. And later, our brothers and sisters tried to help us out. Some gave us money and others gave us things we needed. Still others supported us with their fellowship. It was God's love and His words that guided us through those darkest of days.

## 91. A Rebel Repents

By Gu Wenqing, China

I became a Christian in 1990. There was a church leader who used to say, “The Bible is the foundation of our faith, and as believers, we have to follow the Bible.” Those words really took root in my heart, and I thought to myself, “I need to read the Bible a lot, and as long as I understand it, I’ll have a path in my faith.” So I read the Scriptures over and over and often went to my spiritual elders for advice. I remember one of those elders gave me these words of encouragement: “With your passion for the Bible, the Lord is sure to have an important use for you someday.” Hearing these words really excited me. It also made me worship the Bible even more. From then on, I started getting up at 4 a.m. every morning to read the Scriptures, and I had various Bible verses posted all over my house. Whenever I had a moment free, I was either reading or memorizing Bible passages. When I slept at night, I’d even put a Bible by my pillow, thinking that if the Lord came back in the night, I could go greet Him with a Bible in my arms. In short, I just couldn’t stand to be apart from my Bible. After a few years, I was one of the main co-workers of the Charismatics in our city, responsible for over 300 gathering sites. As I was so in love with the Bible, I was always telling the brothers and sisters, “The Lord Jesus said: **‘Man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God’** (Matthew 4:4). All of God’s words are in the Bible, so reading the Bible is as important as our daily meals. The Bible is the foundation of our faith, so we have to follow it no matter what. This is what it means to be a true believer.”

In 1997, a lot of churches in Northeastern China had members accepting Almighty God’s work of the last days, one after another. One of

the upper leaders rushed to convene a meeting of co-workers where he showed us a bunch of propaganda smearing and condemning Eastern Lightning and told us, “There’s a Church now called Eastern Lightning. They say the Lord Jesus has returned in the flesh as Almighty God and that He’s uttered new words and opened the scroll. They say the Bible is now out of date, and that reading Almighty God’s words is the only way to gain sustenance. How could this be? For thousands of years, all believers in the Lord have been reading the Bible. All of God’s words are in the Bible, and nothing outside of the Bible is God’s word. No matter what, we must always stay true to the Bible. Departing from the Bible is a betrayal of the Lord, and when He comes, He won’t save you.” I was in complete agreement with him, and I thought, “Right. Everything in our faith is based in the Bible. People in Eastern Lightning don’t even read it, so don’t they stray from the way of the Lord? I must lead brothers and sisters to uphold the Bible and never stray from it.” This upper leader convened three days of meetings like this, talking about how to guard against and oppose Eastern Lightning. After those meetings, I felt like my responsibility was greater than ever. To protect the church, I went to great lengths along with other co-workers to seal it off and resist Eastern Lightning. At every gathering, we talked about how to guard against and resist it. I even urged brothers and sisters to fast and pray, and to ask the Lord to stop Eastern Lightning from stealing our church’s sheep.

One day, a sister told me that a co-worker believed in Eastern Lightning now, and that the most enthusiastic members of her gathering site had gone along with him. Hearing this made me so anxious that I rushed right over to his place without eating and saw that a gathering of about 40 people was missing 19. Most notably, those 19 were the most devout members in that gathering site. Seeing that those good sheep had been

stolen by Eastern Lightning really upset me. I thought to myself, “Eastern Lightning must be really formidable to have stolen those good sheep after just a few days’ work.” So I rushed to visit those brothers and sisters to dissuade them, and I said, “Followers of Eastern Lightning claim the Lord has returned and uttered new words, but this is just an attempt to mislead people. All of God’s words are in the Bible, and anything else is a departure from the way of the Lord. These people won’t be raised into the kingdom when the Lord comes. Then won’t all those years of faith in the Lord have been in vain? You must repent to the Lord right away.” I thought that they would listen to me, but surprisingly, one of the sisters said to me, “Sister Gu, your claim that all of God’s words are in the Bible isn’t factual. It says in John 21:25, ‘And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written.’ This verse shows us that the things the Lord Jesus said and the work He did weren’t fully recorded in the Bible. Furthermore, Revelation prophesies that when the Lord returns, He’ll open the scroll and break the seven seals, and speak to the churches. Clearly, God’s new words for the last days couldn’t possibly have been written in the Bible beforehand, so your claim that all of God’s words are in the Bible doesn’t hold water.” I really didn’t know how to refute this. I thought, “Right. That Bible verse was really clear, so why haven’t I ever thought about it before?” Then the sister went on to say, “Almighty God is the Lord Jesus returned. He’s expressed all truths that judge, cleanse, and save mankind. These truths are the Holy Spirit’s words to the churches. This is the opening of the scroll prophesied in Revelation. Believing in Almighty God isn’t betraying the Lord, rather it is hearing God’s voice and following the Lamb’s footsteps. Just like it says in Revelation, **‘These are they which follow the Lamb wherever He goes’**

(Revelation 14:4). You should read Almighty God's words too. Humbly seeking is the only way to hear God's voice and welcome the Lord's return!" I really didn't want to hear what they had to say, and so I just picked up a Bible, waved it, and said, "I understand the Bible—I don't need to seek! Anything outside of the Bible is heresy, and you won't be saved!" I went every day for a week, trying to change their minds. But no matter what I said, they were all determined to follow Almighty God. I didn't end up getting a single one of the 19 back. No matter how much I thought the matter through, I remained puzzled, and asked myself, "Once they read the book of Eastern Lightning, why couldn't their minds be changed, no matter what? Was it really like the upper leader told us that there was some sort of drug in their book? But they seemed totally normal, not at all disoriented, and they were all so energetic and full of faith. Their fellowship was also so insightful and couldn't be refuted." I was so confused. I wanted to see exactly what was written in that Eastern Lightning book. But I thought that to stray from the Bible was betraying the Lord, and I wouldn't be saved, so I didn't dare give it another thought. Later on, I expelled those 19 people from the church and urged everyone else not to have anything to do with them. I particularly urged the co-workers to keep a close eye on their flocks, and to immediately expel anyone who accepted Eastern Lightning.

I tried my best to seal off the church, but more and more brothers and sisters kept joining Eastern Lightning. There was someone else nearly every day—I just couldn't stop it. I was entirely consumed with this. I was working really long hours every single day trying to get them to turn back, but I didn't convince a single one. What really surprised me was that before long, even Brother Wang Mingyi, who'd worked alongside me, joined Eastern Lightning. This was really unexpected. Mingyi had started out just like me, always talking about how to guard against and resist Eastern

Lightning. I never thought that he'd end up joining them. I went to his home to grill him. I said, "You're well aware that Eastern Lightning is a departure from the Bible. How can you believe in it?" His response was, "Sister Gu, I listened to the leader before, too, and didn't seek or look into the teaching of Eastern Lightning at all. I even blindly resisted and condemned it. But after reading Almighty God's words, I saw that they unveil so many of the Bible's mysteries, and give us a path to be cleansed of sin. Almighty God's words are the truth, and the voice of God. He is the Lord Jesus returned. You should read His words too! ..." At that point, I just cut him off, saying, "That's enough! You've been misled—don't try to do the same to me. I don't care what you say to me. There's no way I'm reading that Eastern Lightning book!" I slammed the door and left in a huff. Later I heard Co-worker Liu say that another church had had over 100 members taken by Eastern Lightning, and lots of other co-workers were saying that in their areas, good sheep were being stolen by Eastern Lightning every day, and they couldn't get any of them back. Hearing these things came as such a huge shock to me. I wondered, "How can Eastern Lightning be so formidable? Could it really be that the Lord has returned? Why would so many people accept it, and have such faith in it otherwise?"

In September of 1997, Brother Li Zhi, one of the main co-workers in our church, joined Eastern Lightning along with his wife. When I heard the news, I grabbed my Bible and gathered up four other co-workers to go see them. When we got there, without letting them say a word, I just yelled at them, "Don't you even have a conscience? The Lord Jesus has graced you so much—have you forgotten that? How could you believe in Almighty God? What did they give you? How much did they pay you?" Surprisingly, Li Zhi smiled and said, "They gave us the truth and life, not money." This made me even angrier, and I responded, "How could they give you life?"

Anything outside of the Bible is betraying the Lord. What truth and life?” Unexpectedly, he asked me a question in response, “Would you say that truth and life come from God, or from the Bible? What did the Lord Jesus say when He rebuked the Pharisees? **‘Search the scriptures; for in them you think you have eternal life: and they are they which testify of Me. And you will not come to Me, that you might have life’** (John 5:39–40). His words were very clear. The Bible bears witness to God, but it doesn’t contain eternal life. Looking for eternal life inside the Bible is a mistake. Only Christ is the truth, the way, and the life, and only by following Christ and submitting to His work and words can we gain the truth and eternal life.” I truly didn’t know how to answer back when I heard the brother’s fellowship. I felt kind of embarrassed. I thought to myself, “You always used to listen to me preach, so why are you explaining things to me now, refuting me? After all my years reading the Bible, how could you know more about faith in the Lord than me?” I just responded with something really unreasonable, saying, “I don’t care what you say. Anyone who doesn’t read the Bible is going to hell.” Then the other four co-workers tried to convince them with both the carrot and the stick, but no matter what we said, Li Zhi and his wife remained steadfast in their faith in Almighty God. When I got home, I thought to myself, “I used to know much more about the Bible than those other people who’ve joined Eastern Lightning. Before, they’d listen to my sermons, but just a few days after accepting Eastern Lightning, they were able to render me tongue-tied with just a few words. What is going on? Could it be that Eastern Lightning really is the true way?” But I quickly discarded that thought, telling myself, “That can’t be! Anything outside the Bible is a betrayal of the Lord. I’ll stick to the Bible and wait for the Lord to return and take me into heaven.”



Seeing more and more people accepting Eastern Lightning, I wasn't even delivering sermons at gatherings anymore. I was just using a bunch of materials that opposed Eastern Lightning and went on about those in co-workers' meetings and Sunday services instead. I also threatened everyone so they wouldn't dare look into Eastern Lightning, and I even worked with leaders and co-workers from other churches to fight it together. If I heard about someone trying to convert a church member to Eastern Lightning, I'd rush right over and chase them off. Sometimes I was afraid riding my bike would be too slow, so I'd take a taxi all the way across town to chase off Eastern Lightning members. I thought I was safeguarding the way of the Lord and protecting the flock, and I was even willing to put my life on the line for it. But what I couldn't understand was why it was that the harder I fought against it, the more incidents in the church there were. In August 1999, while we were doing a group baptism, quite a few people were arrested and taken to the police station. Then in August 2000, I was arrested along with three important co-workers while performing baptisms. My home was also searched and all of the church's offerings were taken by the police. While in custody, I couldn't stop thinking through everything that had happened in the church those last few years. The elders who always used to invite me to share sermons and evangelize, Sister Jiang Ru and Brother Wu Yong, were trying to protect their flock, so they'd isolated their church to resist Eastern Lightning. They were extremely devout Christians, but shockingly, they both got cancer and died agonizing deaths. One time in 1998 in a big meeting with over 200 key church co-workers, one co-worker was suddenly possessed by a demon, and no one could drive it out, no matter how everyone prayed for him. Incident after incident kept going through my mind, and I just couldn't figure out why the church was so troubled. I thought about how over my years of following the Lord, I'd

given up my job and my family to work hard for the Lord. I stayed on top of all sorts of tasks in the church and worked hard to safeguard the way of the Lord and protect the flock. Why wasn't the Lord protecting or blessing me? Why was it that the more I fought Eastern Lightning, the more I suffered and was left in a constant state of anxiety? Could it be that resisting Eastern Lightning was a mistake? Had the Lord really returned? Over my seven days in custody, I hardly slept. I was utterly miserable. I prayed to the Lord, saying, "Lord, so much has happened in the church. What's the real reason behind it all? What exactly am I doing wrong? ..." When I was released from custody, I saw that the church was becoming increasingly desolate—it was heartbreaking. I said another prayer to the Lord: "Lord! Why is the church in this state? The church is built thanks to Your precious blood, so why are You neglecting it? Oh Lord! I'm really suffering. The flock is scattering, and the more I fight Eastern Lightning, the more disorder there is in the church. I don't know how to salvage all of this and revive the church. Lord, please open up a path for me!" But no matter how I prayed, the church remained in disarray. The co-workers had scattered to the winds and were hiding out of fear of being arrested. The church was in chaos and attendance was dropping. I didn't know what to preach on and dreaded Wednesday and Sunday sermons. Brothers and sisters would nod off while I talked, and I couldn't do anything about it. I didn't know what to pray about and my faith was waning. Suddenly, I found I didn't have my earlier resolve, that I'd keep my faith and love for the Lord even if no one else did. I was slowly sinking into depravity. I started watching TV and movies, and even learned to play mahjong and poker. I was living in sin and couldn't extricate myself. I often found myself sitting in my doorway, clutching my Bible, feeling incredibly miserable and lost. I truly had no idea how to carry on. During that period of time, I was on my knees a lot,

crying out to the Lord, begging Him, saying, “Lord Jesus, where are You? I feel like I’m about to die. Lord, I’m begging You, please save me, and save the church! ...”

In 2002, just when I was at my weakest, Brother Zhou Zheng from Southern China called me up and asked me to visit him for some devotional studies. I gave heartfelt thanks to God when I heard this and I was eager to take advantage of this opportunity to regain my strength. When I got there, I saw that the brothers and sisters there were all doing even better than the last time I’d been two years before. Their faith was stronger. When they saw me, they were comforting and encouraging, and felt just like family. I was really moved. The next day, Zhou Zheng asked me how things were going in general for me, which hit me right where it hurt. I told him about what was going on with the church, without holding anything back. After I was done speaking, he shared this fellowship: “It’s not just your church losing its vitality right now. This is happening in churches all over the place. Believers’ faith and love are cooling, and they’re not disciplined for their sins. Co-workers have nothing to preach about and are engaged in jealous battles and infighting. Churches are splintering—they haven’t had the Lord’s presence for a long time.” He also told me about why all the churches were becoming so desolate. He read me Chapter 8, Verse 11 from the Book of Amos. Jehovah God said: **“The days come ... that I will send a famine in the land, not a famine of bread, nor a thirst for water, but of hearing the words of Jehovah.”** Then he said, “We can see from this verse that one reason for this desolation in the churches is that people aren’t practicing God’s words. It’s like late in the Age of Law, when the Jewish chief priests, scribes, and Pharisees were only upholding human traditions, not the law of Jehovah. They were making subpar sacrifices, and openly selling livestock and trading money in the temple, turning it into a den of

thieves, so God was disgusted and abandoned it. Once it no longer had God's work, people did whatever they wanted and weren't disciplined for their sins. The temple became barren. The primary reason for this was that religious leaders weren't keeping Jehovah's commandments and had strayed from the Lord's way. Another reason for this desolation within the churches was that God was doing a new stage of work, so the Holy Spirit's work had shifted. The Lord Jesus was working and leading people outside of the temple, ushering in the Age of Grace, and the people who followed Him could gain watering and sustenance. As long as they prayed and confessed to the Lord, their sins were forgiven and they could enjoy all the grace, peace and joy bestowed by the Lord. But the chief priests, scribes and Pharisees who refused to accept His work, resisting and condemning Him, and those in the temples who insisted on going along with them, were naturally abandoned and eliminated by God's work, falling into darkness and desolation." I felt really illuminated by the brother's fellowship, but I was also confused, thinking, "I've read all of that countless times in the Bible, so why have I never gained this illumination from my readings? How did they figure this out? I'd better listen to them." Zhou Zheng then went on to say, "Just like the reason for the temple's decline in the Age of Law, today's churches are in this desolate state because God is doing a new stage of work." When I heard him say this, my heart skipped a beat and it occurred to me that they might be with Eastern Lightning. Everyone said what they taught was really formidable—what if I was misled, too? I started feeling really nervous and conflicted: Should I hear them out, or not? I ended up deciding to stay and continue listening because I really wanted to resolve the problem in the church. Over all those years, none of the pastors or elders, from China or abroad, could help at all; no matter how they expounded the Bible, fasted, or prayed, none of the solutions they came up

with worked. The church just kept deteriorating. But those brothers and sisters were full of faith and love, and their fellowship was illuminating. No one could be doing so well unless they had the Holy Spirit's work and guidance. If I could find the way to revive the church through their fellowship, then there was hope for us yet. I wanted to seize this chance, and even if they were with Eastern Lightning, I didn't have to be afraid, because I knew the Bible and couldn't be misled. So I started listening while looking through the Bible to verify what they said, to see if it accorded with the Bible.

Zhou Zheng then read from Amos 4:7–8: **“And also I have withheld the rain from you, when there were yet three months to the harvest: and I caused it to rain on one city, and caused it not to rain on another city: one piece was rained on, and the piece whereupon it rained not withered. So two or three cities wandered to one city, to drink water; but they were not satisfied: yet have you not returned to Me,** said Jehovah.” He explained this, saying, “This verse mentions one city having rain while another has drought. This ‘rain’ refers to the Holy Spirit's work. God takes the Holy Spirit's work from all places and moves it to those people who accept His new work. Those who keep up with God's footsteps have the watering and sustenance of the Holy Spirit's current words and gain His work. But those who don't accept God's new work are naturally abandoned and eliminated in the course of God's work, and live in darkness.” At this point in his fellowship it started making more sense to me, and I thought to myself, “So the reason the church is barren is because God is doing new work, so the Holy Spirit's work has shifted. No wonder I haven't felt God's presence all these years, and I've felt such spiritual darkness, as if I'd fallen into a bottomless pit without a shred of hope, and I have been living in utter misery.” At the thought of catching up with God's

footsteps and enjoying the Holy Spirit's work and guidance again, I eagerly asked Zhou Zheng, "How can someone keep up with the Lamb's footsteps and gain the Holy Spirit's work?" He told me, "It's prophesied seven times in Revelation, **'He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches'** (Revelation Chapters 2, 3). This prophecy tells us that God will speak to the churches in the last days, and everyone who recognizes God's voice will keep up with God's footsteps and attend the Lamb's wedding feast." Then he got out a book and went on, "This book contains the Holy Spirit's words to the churches. Read this and you'll understand everything." I took it and saw **The Word Appears in the Flesh**. Wasn't that Eastern Lightning's book? I was stunned for a moment and thought, "I've been going head-to-head with them for five years, but I've never really been face-to-face with them until now." I thought of all those brothers and sisters who couldn't be convinced otherwise once they'd listened to Eastern Lightning. I was so nervous that I felt like my heart was in my throat. I said a prayer, "Lord, please, please protect me. I can't stray from the Bible, I can't stray from Your way no matter what." So I asked, "How could this book contain God's words? God's words are all in the Bible, and nothing else is the word of God. Departing from the Bible is heresy—it's betraying the Lord." I couldn't sit there any longer, and I stood up in a huff and refused to hear another word. Seeing how resistant I was and that I'd stopped listening, they all got on their knees and prayed for me, in tears, asking God to enlighten me and have me know God's work. I was standing off to the side, and hearing their heartfelt prayers really moved me. I thought to myself, "Without the Holy Spirit's work, who could possibly be so loving?" At this point, I started to slowly calm down and let go of some of my resistance.

After they finished praying, Zhou Zheng shared some of his experience with me. He said, “I understand how you feel. I was just like you at first—I too resisted God’s work of the last days. I went along with the pastors and elders in fabricating rumors about The Church of Almighty God, and I authored materials against it. I even intimidated brothers and sisters to keep them from believing in Almighty God. I did so many things to resist and blaspheme God, thinking I was safeguarding the Lord’s way and being devoted. I believed in God but didn’t know Him, and I was intransigent and arrogant. If it hadn’t been for God punishing and disciplining me, for His authoritative and soul-touching words, I never would have submitted.” He also said he’d always thought that all of God’s words were in the Bible, and that nothing else was the word of God, so departing from the Bible was heresy. Then he read some of Almighty God’s words and understood that this doesn’t hold water, and that it’s not in line with the facts. At first, I was really confused and wondered how it wasn’t factual. Then he said, “You know the Bible well, so you should know that it was compiled by people years after the Lord finished working, so that means inevitably some of the content was omitted or cut out. Some of the prophets’ words from God weren’t recorded in the Old Testament in their entirety, but were put into the Apocrypha, such as Ezra’s prophecies.” He also said, “In the Age of Grace the Lord Jesus’ work and words weren’t all documented in the Scriptures. He was officially working for three and a half years, and who knows how much He said, how many sermons He delivered during that time. If we add up all of the Lord Jesus’ words from the Four Gospels, that would just be a few hours of speaking for Him. Compared to how much He must have said over those three and a half years, we see it’s very limited! It also says in John, ‘And there are also many other things which Jesus did, the which, if they should be written every one, I suppose

that even the world itself could not contain the books that should be written' (John 21:25). Could it really be true that nothing outside of the Bible is the word of God? Is that accurate? It's prophesied a number of times in Revelation, **'He that has an ear, let him hear what the Spirit says to the churches'** (Revelation Chapters 2, 3). This proves that the Lord has more to say to the churches in the last days. How could those words for the last days be written in the Bible ahead of time? Revelation also prophesies that the Lamb will open the scroll, which started out sealed, and only the Lamb can break the seals. Could the content of that scroll already be documented in the Bible? Definitely not. So does the pastors' claim that 'all of God's words are in the Bible' stand to reason? Isn't that denying and condemning God's own words?" At that point I was totally convinced. I thought to myself, "It's true, Revelation clearly prophesied that the Lamb would open the scroll, breaking the seven seals in the last days. So how could that specific content already be recorded in the Bible? By insisting there were no words of God outside the Bible, I've been wrong." Zhou Zheng told me, "The Bible is just a historical record of God's work, and both the Old and the New Testament were put together and edited by human beings after God had finished a stage of work. God doesn't work according to the Bible, nor is He limited by it. God works according to His own management plan and mankind's needs. When the Lord Jesus came to work, He didn't work according to the Old Testament, instead He went beyond the Scriptures of the time, preaching on the way of repentance, healing the sick and casting out demons, telling people to forgive others seventy times seven, not keeping the Sabbath, etc. In the end, He was crucified, concluding the work of redemption. But none of this could be found in the Old Testament. Some of it even seemed to contradict the laws of the Old Testament. If we go by what pastors say, that 'anything outside the Scriptures is heresy,' wouldn't



that be condemning the Lord Jesus' work, too? God is the Creator, and His abundance encompasses everything. So could it be true that He can only perform the limited work recorded in the Bible? Is it true that God can't do new work or utter new words outside of the Bible? Wouldn't that be delimiting and blaspheming God? The Pharisees used the Old Testament to condemn the Lord Jesus' work, saying that it went outside the Scriptures, that it was heresy. They denied and condemned the truths He expressed, and ultimately had Him crucified, and they were damned and punished by God. Now Almighty God has come and expressed all truths that cleanse and save mankind. These are the Holy Spirit's words to the churches, and this is God giving us the way of eternal life in the last days. If we don't listen, read, or seek, and just blindly cling to the Bible, resisting and condemning God's work and words in the last days, isn't that making the same mistake as the Pharisees? That will get us abandoned and eliminated by God's work!" Hearing this fellowship from him did leave me feeling afraid, and something the Lord Jesus said came to mind: **"And whoever shall speak a word against the Son of man, it shall be forgiven him: but to him that blasphemeth against the Holy Spirit it shall not be forgiven"** (Luke 12:10). Thinking of myself in this light, I thought, "If Almighty God's words really are from God, then they are the Holy Spirit's words, and if I call His work and words heresy, isn't that blaspheming the Holy Spirit? This would mean I can't be forgiven in this life or the world to come. I can't keep opposing and condemning this. I must try hard to seek and investigate it."

Then Zhou Zheng read a couple passages of Almighty God's words for me: **"Many people believe that understanding and being able to interpret the Bible is the same as finding the true way—but in fact, are things really so simple? No one knows the reality of the Bible: that it is nothing more than a historical record of God's work, and a testament**

**to the previous two stages of God's work, and that it offers you no understanding of the aims of God's work. Everyone who has read the Bible knows that it documents the two stages of God's work during the Age of Law and the Age of Grace. The Old Testament chronicles the history of Israel and Jehovah's work from the time of creation until the end of the Age of Law. The New Testament records Jesus' work on earth, which is in the Four Gospels, as well as the work of Paul—are these not historical records? Bringing up the things of the past today makes them history, and no matter how true or real they might be, they are still history—and history cannot address the present, for God does not look back on history! And so, if you only understand the Bible, and understand nothing of the work God intends to do today, and if you believe in God but do not seek the work of the Holy Spirit, then you do not understand what it means to seek God. If you read the Bible in order to study the history of Israel, to research the history of God's creation of all the heavens and earth, then you do not believe in God. But today, since you believe in God, and pursue life, since you pursue the knowledge of God, and do not pursue dead words and doctrines or an understanding of history, you must seek God's intentions of today, and you must look for the direction of the Holy Spirit's work. If you were an archeologist you could read the Bible—but you are not, you are one of those who believe in God, and you had best seek God's intentions of today” (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Concerning the Bible (4)). “During the time of Jesus, Jesus led the Jews and all those who followed Him according to the Holy Spirit's work in Him at the time. He did not take the Bible as the basis of what He did, but spoke according to His work; He paid no heed to what the Bible said, nor did He search in the Bible for a path to lead His followers. Right from**

when He began to work, He spread the way of repentance—a word of which there was absolutely no mention in the prophecies of the Old Testament. Not only did He not act according to the Bible, but He also led a new path, and did new work. Never did He refer to the Bible when He preached. During the Age of Law, no one had ever been able to perform His miracles of healing the sick and casting out demons. So, too, were His work, His teachings, and the authority and power of His words beyond any man in the Age of Law. Jesus simply did His newer work, and even though many people condemned Him using the Bible—and even used the Old Testament to crucify Him—His work surpassed the Old Testament; if this were not so, why did people nail Him to the cross? Was it not because it said nothing in the Old Testament of His teaching, and His ability to heal the sick and cast out demons? His work was done to lead a new path, it was not to deliberately pick a fight against the Bible, or to deliberately dispense with the Old Testament. He simply came to perform His ministry, to bring the new work to those who yearned for and sought Him. ... To people, it appeared as if His work had no basis, and there was much of it that was at odds with the records of the Old Testament. Was this not man's fallaciousness? Do regulations need to be applied to the work of God? And must God work according to the foretelling of prophets? After all, which is greater: God or the Bible? Why must God work according to the Bible? Could it be that God has no right to exceed the Bible? Can God not depart from the Bible and do other work? Why did Jesus and His disciples not keep the Sabbath? If He were to practice in light of the Sabbath and according to the commandments of the Old Testament, why did Jesus not keep the Sabbath after He came, but instead washed feet, covered head, broke bread, and drank wine? Is this not all absent

**from the commandments of the Old Testament? If Jesus honored the Old Testament, why did He break with these regulations? You should know which came first, God or the Bible! Being the Lord of the Sabbath, could He not also be the Lord of the Bible?"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Concerning the Bible (1)). When I heard these words, I felt like they were really authoritative. Over all my years of faith, I'd heard plenty of sermons from both foreign and Chinese clergy, and I'd read some books on spirituality, but I'd never seen anyone reveal the inside story of the Bible so clearly and thoroughly. It was really enlightening for me. I thought to myself, "It's true, the Bible is just a historical record of God's work, and it came after God did that work. But I've been limiting God to the scope of the Bible, thinking that He shouldn't do any work or utter new words outside of that. I've been so foolish! I see now that Almighty God's words really have come from God, they are the Holy Spirit speaking and I need to do some seeking, otherwise I'll miss my chance to welcome the Lord, and my regrets will come too late." So I said an urgent prayer, asking for the Lord to guide me.

But I still had some confusion. The Lord Jesus had clearly prophesied that He would return on a cloud and appear openly to all people, but I still hadn't seen that happen. They were saying He'd already come back and He was in the flesh, uttering new words. So were there any biblical prophecies about the Lord's second coming being in the flesh? I asked Zhou Zheng about this. He told me, "There are some biblical prophecies about the Lord coming on a cloud and openly appearing to everyone, but there are also quite a few prophecies about Him coming in secret, and in the flesh. The Lord Jesus said: '**Behold, I come as a thief**' (Revelation 16:15). '**As the days of Noah were, so shall also the coming of the Son of man be**' (Matthew 24:37). '**Therefore be you also ready: for in such an hour as you think not the**

**Son of man comes’ (Matthew 24:44). ‘For as the lightning, that lightens out of the one part under heaven, shines to the other part under heaven; so shall also the Son of man be in His day. But first must He suffer many things, and be rejected of this generation’ (Luke 17:24–25).** These verses all mention the Son of man coming, and the Son of man means born of a person, of flesh and blood, with normal humanity. If He came in spiritual form on a cloud, appearing to all people, everyone would be afraid when they saw Him and would rush to prostrate themselves. Who would dare resist or reject Him? Would He suffer a lot, and be rejected by this generation when He returns? Definitely not. So the Lord Jesus prophesied that He would return in two different ways. First, He’d come in secret in the flesh as the Son of man to express truths and do the work of judgment beginning with the house of God, making a group of overcomers before the disasters. Then after the disasters, the Lord will come on a cloud and openly appear to everyone. If we just wait to see the Lord Jesus on a cloud without accepting God’s work and words when He comes secretly in the flesh, we could easily be rejected by the Lord!” His fellowship was a major awakening for me. I finally realized that the Son of man refers to God in the flesh. I had talked about those Bible verses a lot with others over the years, saying that the Lord would come like a thief, telling them to be vigilant and pray, waiting for the Lord, but I didn’t see that they prophesied the Lord coming in secret.

I asked Zhou Zheng another question after that. I said, “The Lord Jesus was crucified as a sin offering for mankind, and He’s taken on our sins. As believers in the Lord, our sins are forgiven, so we should be taken straight up into the kingdom of heaven when He comes. Why would God need to do another stage of work for salvation?” In response, he asked me, “You say believers can get into the kingdom because their sins are forgiven, but is

there any basis for this in the Lord's words? He just forgave us of our sins, but He never said that we could get into the kingdom because our sins were forgiven. This is just a human notion and imagining. Our sins being forgiven just means He doesn't see us as sinners anymore, but it doesn't mean we're free from sin. It especially doesn't mean we're pure, or that we no longer sin or resist God. As for who can get into the kingdom, the Lord Jesus clearly stated: **'Not every one that said to Me, Lord, Lord, shall enter into the kingdom of heaven; but he that follows the will of My Father which is in heaven. Many will say to Me in that day, Lord, Lord, have we not prophesied in Your name, and in Your name have cast out devils, and in Your name done many wonderful works? And then will I profess to them, I never knew you: depart from Me, you that work iniquity'** (Matthew 7:21–23). Weren't those people who prophesied and cast out devils in the Lord's name also forgiven of their sins? So why would the Lord say He never knew them, and condemn them as evildoers? These words show that all those who live in sin, even if they work and expend themselves in the name of the Lord, will ultimately be condemned and that they are unworthy of God's kingdom." Then Zhou Zheng read some of Almighty God's words to answer my question: **"A sinner such as you, who has just been redeemed, and has not been changed, or been perfected by God, can you be in line with God's intentions? For you, you who are still of your old self, it is true that you were saved by Jesus, and that you are not counted as a sinner because of the salvation of God, but this does not prove that you are not sinful, and are not impure. How can you be saintly if you have not been changed? Within, you are beset by impurity, selfish and mean, yet you still wish to descend with Jesus—you should be so lucky! You have missed a step in your belief in God: You have merely been redeemed, but you have not been changed. For**

**you to be in line with God's intentions, God must personally do the work of changing and cleansing you; if you are only redeemed, you will be incapable of attaining sanctity. In this way you will be unqualified to share in the good blessings of God, for you have missed out a step in God's work of managing man, which is the key step of changing and perfecting. You, a sinner who has just been redeemed, are therefore incapable of directly inheriting God's inheritance"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Concerning Appellations and Identity). **"Though Jesus did much work among man, He only completed the redemption of all mankind and became man's sin offering; He did not rid man of all his corrupt disposition. Fully saving man from the influence of Satan not only required Jesus to become the sin offering and bear the sins of man, but it also required God to do even greater work to rid man completely of his satanically corrupted disposition. And so, now that man has been forgiven of his sins, God has returned to the flesh to lead man into the new age, and begun the work of chastisement and judgment. This work has brought man into a higher realm. All those who submit under His dominion shall enjoy higher truth and receive greater blessings. They shall truly live in the light, and they shall gain the truth, the way, and the life"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Preface). **"Before man was redeemed, many of Satan's poisons had already been planted within him and, after thousands of years of being corrupted by Satan, he has within him an established nature that resists God. Therefore, when man has been redeemed, it is nothing more than a case of redemption in which man is bought at a high price, but the poisonous nature within him has not been eliminated. Man that is so defiled must undergo a change before becoming worthy to serve God. By means of this work of judgment and chastisement, man will fully come to know the filthy and**

**corrupt essence within his own self, and he will be able to change completely and become clean. Only in this way can man become worthy to return before the throne of God. All the work done this day is so that man can be made clean and be changed; through judgment and chastisement by the word, as well as through refinement, man can purge away his corruption and be made pure. Rather than deeming this stage of work to be that of salvation, it would be more apt to say it is the work of purification. In truth, this stage is that of conquest as well as the second stage in the work of salvation”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. The Mystery of the Incarnation (4)). Then he fellowshiped, “As longstanding believers, we’re all clear on one thing. After gaining faith, when we sin, we can be forgiven by confessing and repenting to the Lord. But what we can’t deny is that we can’t help but keep lying and sinning all the time. We live in a cycle of sinning by day, confessing by night, and we can’t escape these bonds of sin. Because the Lord Jesus just did the work of redemption, but not the work of judgment and purification for the last days, our sins are forgiven, but we still have a sinful nature. Our satanic nature and dispositions haven’t been resolved, and those things are more entrenched than the sins themselves. They are the root of our sins and resistance to God.” Zhou Zheng also gave a few examples, saying, “We’re arrogant, deceitful, and wicked, and we live by these satanic dispositions, so we’re always lying and cheating, and showing off. We fight over name and gain, and we’re jealous and hateful. When we’re facing disaster or we have problems at home, we misunderstand and blame God, sometimes even denying and betraying Him. Especially when God’s work doesn’t line up with our notions, we resist and condemn God willfully. Now the Lord Jesus has returned in the flesh and expressed truths, doing the judgment work of the last days, lots of long-time believers are delimiting Him according to



their own notions and imaginings, saying that He wouldn't utter new words outside of the Bible or come to work in the flesh. They have no interest in seeking or in submitting to God's work, and they're totally lacking a heart that fears God. Instead, they just resist and condemn it, stubbornly and arrogantly going against God. God is holy, so how could He let those who resist Him, who are of Satan, into His kingdom? Therefore, based on mankind's needs, God is doing a stage of work to rid us of sin on the foundation of the Lord Jesus' redemption work, expressing truths to judge and cleanse our corrupt dispositions. In the Age of Kingdom, Almighty God is expressing all truths that cleanse and save man, and He's revealed all the mysteries of His management plan, like the aims of His six-thousand-year management plan, the inside story of His three stages of work, the mysteries behind the incarnations, the truth about the Bible, and people's future destinations. He's also exposed the truth of mankind's corruption and the root of our sinfulness and resistance to God, showing us the way to change our dispositions and truly repent. This fulfills the Lord Jesus' prophecy: **'I have yet many things to say to you, but you cannot bear them now. However, when He, the Spirit of truth, is come, He will guide you into all truth'** (John 16:12-13). Almighty God has expressed these truths to resolve our sinful nature. All those who can accept the judgment of His words and be cleansed will be protected by God through the disasters and enter His kingdom."

I understood this much better after Zhou Zheng's fellowship. In the Age of Grace, the Lord Jesus just did the work of redemption, redeeming mankind of sin. The Age of Kingdom of the last days is when Almighty God expresses truths for His judgment work, and this is what will resolve our sinful nature, fully saving us from sin and cleansing us. I thought about how I really was still shackled by sin, even after all those years as a

believer. Especially in recent years, I'd become more depraved, on par with a nonbeliever. I was watching TV and movies, and I learned to play mahjong. I was trapped living in sin and couldn't extricate myself. I saw that I was truly unworthy of entering God's kingdom. Those days of living in sin were really painful, and I didn't know how to escape it. I finally saw that I had to accept God's judgment work of the last days to be freed from the bonds of sin, cleansed, and saved. Almighty God's words clearly reveal the root of sinning and show us the inside story of God's work, revealing the path to be cleansed and enter the kingdom. Only God could explain His work so clearly, and only God could save mankind from the bonds of sin. I felt more certain that Almighty God's words were the truth, and the voice of God.

Over the next few days, I hungrily devoured God's words every day, and I quickly became sure that Almighty God is the Lord Jesus returned. Being able to welcome the Lord in His return really excited me, but at the same time, I was full of regret. I would absolutely never have imagined that the Almighty God I'd been opposing and condemning all those years was actually the Lord Jesus I'd been longing for, and that **The Word Appears in the Flesh** I'd been condemning was God's words. I hated myself for being so foolish and blind, and for taking so long to see the light. I held **The Word Appears in the Flesh** in my arms and sobbed. I'd been believing in the Lord but didn't know Him, I'd been arrogant and rebellious, delimiting Him because of my own notions and imaginings, and I hadn't believed that God would return to work in the flesh. But even worse, I'd used blasphemous materials to mislead brothers and sisters, to stop them from investigating God's work of the last days. Based on all the things I'd done, I really deserved God's curse. But God pitied me and He allowed me to hear

His voice and gain His salvation of the last days. His love really is immense!

I started having regular gatherings with those brothers and sisters after that. Everyone sang hymns and praised God together, and fellowshiped on God's words. That kind of church life allowed me to rediscover the joy that the Holy Spirit's work brings, and to enjoy the peace that comes with the Lord's presence. I remember once reading a passage of God's words that really moved me: **"This time around, God comes to do work not in a spiritual body, but in a very ordinary one. Moreover, not only is it the body of God's second incarnation, it is also the body through which God returns to the flesh. It is a very ordinary flesh. You cannot see anything that makes Him stand out from others, but you can gain from Him previously unheard-of truths. This insignificant flesh is what embodies all the words of truth from God, undertakes God's work in the last days, and expresses the whole of God's disposition for man to understand. Do you not desire greatly to see the God in heaven? Do you not desire greatly to understand the God in heaven? Do you not desire greatly to see the destination of mankind? He will tell you all these secrets—secrets that no man has been able to tell you, and He will also tell you of the truths that you do not understand. He is your gate into the kingdom, and your guide into the new age. Such an ordinary flesh holds many unfathomable mysteries. His deeds may be inscrutable to you, but the entire goal of the work He does is sufficient enough to allow you to see that He is not, as people believe, a simple flesh. For He represents the intentions of God and the care shown by God toward mankind in the last days. Though you cannot hear His words seeming to shake the heavens and earth, though you cannot see His eyes as a flame of fire, and though you cannot receive the discipline of His iron**

rod, nevertheless you can hear from His words that God is wrathful and know that God is showing mercy for mankind; you can see the righteous disposition of God and His wisdom, and, moreover, realize God's solicitude for all mankind. The work of God in the last days is to allow man to see the God in heaven living among men on earth, and to enable man to know, submit to, fear, and love God. This is why He has returned to the flesh for a second time. Though what man sees this day is a God that is the same as man, a God with a nose and two eyes, and an unremarkable God, in the end, God will show you that if this man did not exist, heaven and earth would undergo a tremendous change; if this man did not exist, the heavens would grow dim, the earth would be plunged into chaos, and all mankind would live amid famine and plagues. He will show you that if God incarnate did not come to save you in the last days, then God would have long ago destroyed all mankind in hell; if this flesh did not exist, then you would forever be arch-sinners, and you would be corpses evermore. You should know that if this flesh did not exist, all mankind would face an ineluctable calamity and find it impossible to escape the even more severe punishment that God metes out to mankind in the last days. Had this ordinary flesh not been born, you would all be in a state where you beg for life without being able to live and pray for death without being able to die; if this flesh did not exist, then you would not be able to gain the truth and come before the throne of God today, but rather, you would be punished by God because of your grievous sins. Did you know that were it not for the return of God to the flesh, none would have a chance at salvation; and were it not for the coming of this flesh, God would have long ago put an end to the age of old? This being so, are you still able to reject the second incarnation of God? Since you can derive so

**many benefits from this ordinary man, why would you not gladly accept Him?”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Did You Know? God Has Done a Great Thing Among Men). Reading this part was particularly moving: **“Had this ordinary flesh not been born, you would all be in a state where you beg for life without being able to live and pray for death without being able to die; if this flesh did not exist, then you would not be able to gain the truth and come before the throne of God today, but rather, you would be punished by God because of your grievous sins.”** I thought back on those days when I didn’t have the Lord with me. The church felt barren and brothers’ and sisters’ faith was waning. The co-workers didn’t know what to give sermons on, and there was jealousy and infighting. Everyone was living in sin and couldn’t extricate themselves, and they were all living like the walking dead. Almighty God’s words brought me back to life and brought the joy of having God by my side back to me. I also gained a bit of a basic understanding of God’s work. Without God incarnating and speaking, revealing the mysteries of the Bible and His incarnations, I’m sure I’d still be stubbornly clinging to my notions and imaginings. Who knows how many evils I would have committed against God. God’s incarnation has been so important for us!

Thinking back on those five years, so many brothers and sisters shared fellowship and urged me to seek, but I turned a deaf ear. I not only refused to seek or investigate it, but I resisted and condemned it. I even misled others and stood in their way, making them lose their chance to welcome the Lord. Could I even be considered a believer? Wasn’t I opposing the Lord just like the Pharisees, nailing Him to the cross all over again? I’d enjoyed so much of the Lord’s grace in my years as a believer, but when the Lord returned, I didn’t know Him. I even madly resisted Him for five whole years. For five years, I committed unforgivable transgressions. I’m way too

rebellious. Thinking about all my sins, and seeing God's mercy and tolerance, I felt like I had nowhere to hide, and that I couldn't face God. I clutched a book of God's words, kneeled down, and prayed in tears. I said, "Almighty God! You never smote me, even though I've been so rebellious and defiant. You gave me the chance to repent. I truly don't know how to repay Your mercy. Almighty God! I'm not asking for anything except to use the rest of my life to repay Your love, to do everything in my power to bring those people I kept from You, who haven't yet come before You, back into Your house, so that You may have some comfort." After this, I actively preached the gospel, and within a month, more than 30 brothers and sisters came to accept God's work in the last days.

Whenever I think back on all those times I resisted God, I feel a great pain, like a knife to my heart, especially when I read these words: **"There are those who read the Bible in grand churches and recite it all day long, yet not one among them understands the purpose of God's work. Not one among them is able to know God; still less can any one among them accord with God's intentions. They are all worthless, vile people, each standing on high to lecture God. They willfully oppose God even as they carry His banner. Claiming faith in God, still they eat the flesh and drink the blood of man. All such people are devils that devour the soul of man, head demons that deliberately disturb those trying to step onto the right path, and stumbling blocks impeding those who seek God. They may appear of 'sound constitution,' but how are their followers to know that they are none other than antichrists who lead people to stand against God? How are their followers to know that they are living devils dedicated to the devouring of human souls?"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. All People Who Do Not Know God Are People Who Oppose God). God's words describe me perfectly. I was leading brothers and

sisters to follow the literal words of the Bible, to adhere to notions, and not to come before God. I exalted the Bible while resisting God's work in the last days. Misled by me, brothers and sisters clung irrationally to the literal words of the Bible and didn't dare accept God's work of the last days. This was harm done to them, catastrophe wrought by me. The Pharisees clung to their Scriptures and had the Lord nailed to the cross, committing a heinous sin. I had been clinging to the Bible, condemning Almighty God's work of the last days, essentially crucifying God again. I was playing the part of a modern-day Pharisee. Even if I died a hundred deaths, I could never make up for my sins. All I want now is to do my best to pursue the truth, fulfill my duty, and share the gospel to repay my debt to God.

## 92. Growing Through Failures and Setbacks

By Sheila, the Philippines

I accepted Almighty God's work of the last days in December 2020. I was elected as a church leader a few months later. The church had lots of work that needed to be done and many issues that needed to be resolved. I threw myself into this work enthusiastically. After a while, I became a bit more familiar with the church's work, but I was still running into a lot of problems. Lots of newcomers weren't attending gatherings regularly. Some were being impacted by online rumors, some didn't clearly understand the truths of visions and had unresolved religious notions, and some couldn't attend gatherings regularly because they were too busy with work. Facing these issues, I worked hard to fellowship with them on God's intentions and help solve their difficulties, but their problems remained unresolved. I felt dejected. I was constantly asking myself why all my hard work still hadn't borne fruit. Why wasn't God blessing our church? The brothers and sisters had so many issues and my fellowships with them had failed one after another. Maybe I wasn't well suited for leadership? I couldn't help but reproach myself: I was the cause of all of this. If I accepted responsibility and resigned, someone else could serve as leader and work would be more successful. I started feeling negative and got passive in my duty, just waiting to be dismissed. I even thought that God was setting up these difficulties to expose me, to have me fail, and He had probably already deserted me. That thought scared me. Had God really abandoned me? I was praying and seeking, but I still didn't understand God's intention. The thought that God had abandoned me kept surfacing from time to time. I felt negative, fatigued, and weak all the time. I was really afraid, and felt that I no longer had the Holy Spirit's work.



At that time the church was short of a few team leaders, so the supervisor recommended some newcomers to me. I just directly appointed them without looking into things much. At first, they all said they wanted to take on a duty, but when they officially began, one said he needed to work and was busy, so he wasn't up to the job, and another would be late to gatherings because of family matters, so also wouldn't be able to do the job. I ultimately determined that for now, they weren't suitable to be cultivated as team leaders and all I could do was select others for the tasks. I worked hard to resolve these difficulties I was encountering in work, but for a while wasn't getting any results. At that moment, I really wasn't able to bear all these failures. I felt negative, and I was even afraid to face the coming of each new day. I didn't want to do church work anymore because I'd worked a lot, but hadn't accomplished anything. I thought I was facing this situation because God wanted to expose me as incompetent, but I didn't want to allow myself to sink into that kind of state. I didn't want to be exposed and eliminated because I wasn't getting results in my duty.

Once in my devotionals, I stumbled upon one of the items in "65. The Principles of Admitting Responsibility and Resigning" in 170 Principles of Practicing the Truth: "Any false leader or worker who does not accept the truth, who cannot do actual work, and who, for some time, has been bereft of the work of the Holy Spirit, must admit responsibility and resign." Reading this made me feel even more negative. What should I do? I hadn't resolved any of the church's problems, so I was a false leader. Should I admit responsibility and resign to let a competent person lead? I'd already been doing church work for three months, but I still hadn't resolved the problems that existed within the church. What's more, in such an environment I still didn't understand God's intention and hadn't made any progress. I was even misunderstanding God. I was worried the others would

think I was too negative, and I was afraid they'd reprimand me for thinking of resigning.

Once in a gathering I read these words of God: **“You are an ordinary person. You must undergo many failures, many periods of bewilderment, many errors of judgment, and many deviations. This can fully reveal your corrupt disposition, your weaknesses and deficiencies, your ignorance and foolishness, enabling you to reexamine and know yourself, and to have knowledge of God’s almightiness, full wisdom, and His disposition. You will gain positive things from Him, and come to understand the truth and enter reality. There will be much amid your experience that does not go as you wish, against which you will feel powerless. With these, you must seek and wait; you must gain from God the answer to each matter, and understand from His words the underlying essence of each matter and the essence of each sort of person. This is how an ordinary, normal person behaves”** (The Word, Vol. 3.

The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Treasuring God’s Words Is the Foundation of Belief in God). God is incredibly wise. I gained a new understanding of how God works. I learned that everyone has to go through some failures and setbacks in their duty, and God’s intention was to have me seek the truth through all of this to resolve my corrupt disposition. I’d faced some difficulties in my duty and experienced some failures, but I hadn’t sought the truth or God’s intention. I just always thought about resigning because I felt like I hadn’t had any results in my duty or done what a leader should do. I didn’t even dare tell the others about my actual situation. I was really ignorant. I didn’t understand God’s intention or why God would let that sort of thing happen to me. I saw from God’s words that I was just a regular person, so it was normal for me to run into some difficulties and failures in my duty. God’s intention was within that. So, I opened up to the brothers and sisters about

my recent state and sought their help. I also told them that I'd had thoughts of admitting responsibility and resigning. They didn't look down on me, but they helped and encouraged me, fellowshiping with me on God's words. I was really moved.

They read me some of Almighty God's words. God says: **"In the course of experiencing the work of God, no matter how many times you have failed, fallen down, been pruned, or revealed, these are not bad things. Regardless of how you have been pruned, or whether it is by leaders, workers, or your brothers or sisters, these are all good things. You must remember this: No matter how much you suffer, you are actually benefiting. Anyone with experience can attest to this. No matter what, being pruned or revealed is always a good thing. It is not a condemnation. It is God's salvation and the best opportunity for you to get to know yourself. It can bring your life experience a change of gears. Without it, you will possess neither the opportunity, the condition, nor the context to be able to reach an understanding of the truth of your corruption. If you truly understand the truth, and are able to unearth the corrupt things hidden in the depths of your heart, if you can clearly distinguish them, then this is good, this has solved a major problem of life entry, and is of great benefit to changes in disposition. Becoming able to truly know yourself is the best opportunity for you to mend your ways and become a new person; it is the best opportunity for you to obtain new life. Once you truly know yourself, you will be able to see that when the truth becomes one's life, it is a precious thing indeed, and you will thirst for the truth, practice the truth, and enter into reality. This is such a great thing! If you can grab this opportunity and earnestly reflect upon yourself and gain a genuine knowledge of yourself whenever you fail or fall down, then in**

**the midst of negativity and weakness, you will be able to stand back up. Once you have crossed this threshold, you will then be able to take a big step forward and enter the truth reality”** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. To Gain the Truth, One Must Learn From the People, Events, and Things Nearby). **“God’s salvation of mankind is a salvation of those who love the truth, a salvation of the part of them with will and resolve, and the part of them that yearns for truth and justice in their hearts. A person’s resolve is the part of them in their heart that yearns for justice, goodness, and truth, and is possessed of conscience. God saves this part of people, and through it, He changes their corrupt disposition, so that they may understand and gain the truth, so that their corruption may be cleansed, and their life disposition may be transformed. If you do not have these things within you, you cannot be saved. ... Why is it said that Peter is a fruit? Because there are things of worth in him, things worth perfecting. He sought the truth in all things, had resolve, and was firm of will; he had reason, was willing to suffer hardship, and loved the truth in his heart; he did not let go of what came to pass, and he was able to learn lessons from all things. These are all strong points. If you have none of these strong points, it means trouble. It will not be easy for you to gain the truth and be saved. If you don’t know how to experience or don’t have experience, you won’t be able to solve other people’s difficulties. Because you are incapable of practicing and experiencing God’s words, you have no idea what to do when things happen to you, you get upset and burst into tears when you encounter problems, and you become negative and run away when you suffer some minor setback, and you are incapable of reacting in the right way. Because of this, it is impossible for you to gain life entry”** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Part Three). After reading this, a sister shared

fellowship with me: “No matter what sort of setbacks and failures we face, we should pray and seek God’s intention, not give up on the truth and our duty. Giving up on our duty isn’t the path to resolving the problem. It’s only through the difficulties and setbacks we encounter in our duties that our corruption and shortcomings are revealed, and we can truly know ourselves. Without those experiences, there’s no way we could see our corruption and what we lack. Then how could we change? So, experiencing failure or stumbling blocks isn’t a bad thing. That’s when we should seek the truth and learn a lesson—we can’t misunderstand God. If we just resign, just give up our duty when we encounter difficulties, how would we experience God’s work and pursue salvation? What testimony would we have? God doesn’t ask much of us. If we have resolve when we face problems and hardships, and genuinely pray and seek the truth, then God will guide and help us.” Reading God’s words and then hearing the sister’s fellowship was really enlightening for me. I realized that experiencing failures and setbacks is God’s love, and it’s a good chance for me to seek the truth and learn a lesson. I thought of how Peter experienced many trials, refinements, setbacks, and failures throughout his life. Sometimes he suffered fleshly weakness, but he never lost faith in God. He kept pursuing the truth, seeking God’s intention, and making up for what he lacked. In the end, he understood the truth and knew God, and achieved submission and love for God. I should be strong and resolute just like Peter, praying to God and seeking His intention when I face setbacks and failures, reflecting on what I lack instead of misunderstanding and blaming God.

Once in my devotionals, I read a passage of God’s words that helped me better understand God’s intention. Almighty God says: **“People must learn to heed God’s words and understand His heart. They must not misunderstand God. In fact, in many cases, people’s concern stems**

from their own self-interest. Speaking generally, it is the fear that they will have no outcome. They're always thinking, 'What if God reveals me, eliminates me, and rejects me?' This is your misinterpretation of God; these are only your one-sided conjectures. You have to figure out what God's intention is. When He reveals people, it is not for the sake of eliminating them. People are revealed in order to expose their shortcomings, mistakes, and their nature essences, to make them know themselves and become capable of true repentance; for this reason, revealing people is in order to help their lives to grow. Without a pure understanding, people are apt to misinterpret God and become negative and weak. They may even give in to despair. In fact, being revealed by God doesn't necessarily mean that you will be eliminated. It is to help you get to know your own corruption, and to make you repent. Oftentimes, because people are rebellious, and do not seek to find resolution in the truth when they reveal corruption, God must exercise discipline. And so, sometimes, He reveals people, exposing their ugliness and pitifulness, getting them to know themselves, which helps their life to grow. Revealing people has two different implications: For the evil people, being revealed means they are eliminated. For those who are able to accept the truth, it is a reminder and a warning; they are made to reflect on themselves, to see their true state, and to stop being wayward and reckless, because to carry on like this would be dangerous. Revealing people in this way is to remind them lest, in performing their duty, they grow muddleheaded and careless, fail to take things seriously, become satisfied with only a few results, and think they have performed their duty to an acceptable standard when, in fact, measured by God's demands, they have fallen far short, and yet they are still complacent and believe themselves to be

**doing fine. In such circumstances, God will discipline, caution, and remind people. Sometimes, God reveals their ugliness—which is patently to serve as a reminder. At such times you should reflect on yourself: Performing your duty like this is inadequate, there is rebelliousness within you, there are too many negative elements, everything you do is perfunctory, and if you still do not repent, by rights you should be punished. Now and then, when God disciplines you, or reveals you, this does not necessarily mean you will be eliminated. This matter should be approached correctly. Even if you are eliminated, you should accept it and submit to it, and make haste to reflect and repent”** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Only by Practicing the Truth and Submitting to God Can One Achieve a Change in Disposition). God’s words showed me that His purpose in exposing people isn’t to eliminate them, but rather to have them recognize their corruption and shortcomings, so they can pursue the truth to resolve their problems and progress faster in life. I couldn’t help but self-reflect. When I faced any type of difficulty or issue, I didn’t diligently consider or seek God’s intention. Nor did I self-reflect to learn about my own issues. I just thought that God was using these situations to expose me and eliminate me, that I wasn’t a suitable leader and I should accept responsibility and resign. I was misunderstanding God. Then I realized that so many issues and difficulties in my work remained unresolved mainly because I wasn’t putting my heart into my duty. I always felt like I had so many things to get done, and I didn’t have any directions or goals when I was working. I just did whatever came to mind without seeking any results. Some newcomers were misled by rumors and I didn’t seek which aspect of the truth I should fellowship on to resolve their notions so that they could discern those rumors and stand firm on the true way. When cultivating people, I didn’t seek the corresponding principles or

get a clear understanding of their actual circumstances, but just did it blindly. As a result, I didn't accomplish anything in that aspect, either. In watering newcomers, I didn't give prior thought to what aspects of the truth I could fellowship on to resolve their issues, so I also didn't get any real results there. Although on the surface it looked like I was working hard, I wasn't being attentive and I wasn't summarizing work issues in a timely manner, which meant nothing was accomplished. Moreover, not only did I fail to reflect and understand myself, but I also failed to seek the truths I should enter into. On the contrary I guessed that God was intentionally exposing me, making me look bad. I was always grumbling, and didn't want to encounter failures and setbacks, but just wanted to always have it easy, to have everything plain sailing. I misunderstood and blamed God at the slightest difficulty. How could I experience God's work and do my duty well? I was so unreasonable. That's not how a created being should act. Realizing this, I felt a lot of regret, and said a prayer to God: "God, You set this situation up to train me, to allow me to grow in life, but I didn't understand Your intention—I misunderstood You. I'm so rebellious. Please enlighten and guide me and help me understand my own corrupt disposition."

After that, I read a passage of Almighty God's words that helped me understand myself. God says: **"I take pleasure in those who are not suspicious of others, and I like those who readily accept the truth; toward these two kinds of people I show great care, for in My eyes they are honest people. If you are deceitful, then you will be guarded and suspicious toward all people and matters, and thus your faith in Me will be built upon a foundation of suspicion. I could never acknowledge such faith. Lacking true faith, you are even more devoid of true love. And if you are liable to doubt God and speculate about Him at will,**



**then you are, without question, the most deceitful of all people. You speculate whether God can be like man: unpardonably sinful, of petty character, devoid of fairness and reason, lacking a sense of justice, given to vicious tactics, treacherous and cunning, pleased by evil and darkness, and so on. Is not the reason that people have such thoughts because they lack the slightest knowledge of God? Such faith is nothing short of sin! There are even some who believe that the ones who please Me are precisely those who flatter and bootlick, and that those lacking in such skills will be unwelcome in the house of God and will lose their place there. Is this the only knowledge you have acquired after all these years? Is this what you have gained? And your knowledge of Me does not stop at these misunderstandings; even worse is your blasphemy against God's Spirit and vilification of Heaven. This is why I say that such faith as yours will only cause you to stray further from Me and be in greater opposition against Me''** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of

God. How to Know the God on Earth). Facing the revelation of God's words, I was so ashamed of myself. I was suspicious of God and misunderstood Him when I encountered failures and setbacks, thinking of Him as being cold and heartless, like people. I thought that when God wants to use someone, He'd allow them to enjoy His grace, but otherwise, He'd eliminate them, fling them to the side and ignore them. I second-guessed and suspected God based on these types of thoughts. I was so deceitful! I hadn't been a believer for long, the truths I understood were limited, and I had lots of flaws, but the church still cultivated me as a leader, giving me a chance to practice so that I could learn the truth as quickly as possible and enter into the truth reality. When I wasn't attentive enough in my duty, causing a lack of accomplishments, the church still didn't dismiss me. The others still all helped and encouraged me. They gave me fellowship on God's words,

guiding me to understand God's intention and recognize my corruption and shortcomings. But I was on my guard against God, suspicious of Him. Was that showing true faith in God? I'd been so deeply corrupted by Satan, always going by Satan's devilish words, like "Trust no one because even your shadow will leave you in darkness" and "Never intend to harm others, but always guard against the harm they might do to you." I was on my guard against everyone, even with God. This showed me that my deceitful disposition was truly very severe, and it was entirely where my suspicions and misunderstandings of God came from. When facing difficulties, I second-guessed and misunderstood God, but God still enlightened and guided me to understand the truth, getting me to see my own problems. I could feel God's love and how real His salvation for me was. I prayed to God, ready to repent and stop living by my deceitful disposition, suspecting and misunderstanding God.

Later, I read this passage of God's words: **"Though you may now perform your duty willingly, and you may forsake things and expend yourself willingly, if you still have misunderstandings, speculations, doubts, or complaints regarding God, or even rebelliousness and resistance against Him, or if you use various methods and techniques to oppose Him and reject His sovereignty over you—if you do not resolve these things—then it will be nigh impossible for the truth to be master of your person, and your life will be exhausting. People often struggle and are tormented in these negative states, as if they had sunk into a quagmire, and they are always preoccupied with the idea of right and wrong. How can they discover and understand the truth? To seek the truth, one must first submit. Then, after a period of experience, they will be able to gain some enlightenment, at which point it is easy to understand the truth. If one is always trying to work out what is right**

**and wrong and gets caught up in what is true and false, they have no way to discover or understand the truth. And what will come of it if one can never understand the truth? Not understanding the truth gives rise to notions and misunderstandings about God; when one has misunderstandings about God, they are likely to complain about Him. When these complaints burst forth, they become opposition; opposition to God is resistance against Him, and a serious transgression. If one has committed many transgressions, then they have committed manifold evils, and should be punished. This is the sort of thing that comes of being forever unable to understand the truth”** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Only by Pursuing the Truth Can One Resolve Their Notions and Misunderstandings of God). Reading this gave me a lingering fear. If I’d kept on living in a state of negativity, not seeking the truth, not opening up to the brothers and sisters, I would have kept on living by my deceitful disposition, misunderstanding God. Then I could have easily blamed God and resisted Him, which would constitute a transgression. I might even do evil and go against God. This would be too dangerous! During the time that I was misunderstanding and second-guessing God, my negative state practically controlled me. I always worried about being exposed and eliminated. I had no sense of freedom—it was so tiring. In my duty I was just exerting myself to complete tasks. As soon as a new problem arose, I couldn’t help but misunderstand God and want to resign. It was God’s words that guided me to open up to the others and to seek the truth and learn of my corrupt disposition. Otherwise, I would have continued misconstruing God and would have decided to give up my duty. The consequences of that would have been frightening.

I read another passage of God’s words later that gave me a path for practice when I encounter problems in church work. God says: “**Regarding**

**the problems that arise in the church, do not be filled with such heavy misgivings. In the course of building the church, mistakes are inevitable, but do not panic when you meet with problems; rather, be calm and collected. Have I not already told you? Come before Me often and pray, and I will clearly show you My intentions”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Utterances of Christ in the Beginning, Chapter 41). I learned from God’s words that running into various difficulties is inevitable when completing church work. It’s perfectly normal and God allows this to happen. When we encounter difficulties, as long as we genuinely pray and lean on God, He will guide us forward. Some new believers who had just accepted God’s work of the last days didn’t fully understand the truths of visions and could still be led astray by rumors. I needed to rely on God more and use His words to expose Satan’s tricks and help new believers lay a foundation on the true way. After understanding God’s intention, then going back to church work, I summarized the errors and issues that existed in our previous work. In response to the issues new believers were encountering, I equipped myself with the relevant truths, and then helped address them through fellowship. As for cultivating people, first I sought the corresponding principles and prayed with my heart. In gatherings I focused on observing who fit the principles for cultivation. Selecting people in this way was somewhat more precise.

At times I still encounter difficulties and failures in my duty, but I look at these issues from a different perspective now. I ask myself: What lesson does God want me to learn from this situation? I consciously pray, read God’s words, and seek a path of practice. I’ve also learned how to seek help from other brothers and sisters. If others point out problems in my work, I’m able to see my own faults and shortcomings. I no longer believe that God is trying to make me look bad. Instead, I feel it’s a good chance to self-

reflect, understand myself, and grow in life. A sister once said to me, “I’ve noticed you’ve become more patient when watering new believers, and when you encounter issues, you’re better at seeking God’s intention than before.” I was so moved to hear this. Even though it was just a tiny change on my part, I truly experienced that God’s love and salvation for mankind are real. God is always guiding me and I have more resolve to fulfill my duty and satisfy Him.

## 93. Why Am I So High and Mighty?

By Frank, South Korea

I'm currently responsible for the church's video work. When starting out, after a period of practice, I came to grasp some of the principles and made some progress with my skills. Soon, I was frequently discovering issues in our work, and in work discussions my suggestions were often accepted by the others. After a while, I got a bit smug. I believed in myself more and more, feeling that I had some caliber, a fairly pure understanding of the principles, and a comprehensive perspective on issues. Although I wasn't a church leader and wasn't in charge of any major work, I figured being able to manage our team's projects wasn't bad.

I noticed that my partner, Brother Justin, had been passive in his duty for a while. I always took the lead in our work discussions and team learning, and had disdain for him for not carrying a burden. While discussing work, I'd often disregard Justin's suggestions and reject his views. I thought, "I'm working with you, but we still end up going with my ideas most of the time, so I may as well do things myself." After a while, I fully took over Justin's responsibilities. In our work discussions, when the others didn't adopt my suggestions, I'd stress repeatedly that my perspective was correct, and sometimes I'd present rules or doctrines as proof to get them to listen to me. After the fact, I would get a little uneasy, feeling like I was always forcing others to listen to me. Wasn't that showing an arrogant disposition? Sometimes I'd try to accept other people's suggestions, but in the end my thinking would still be proven right, so I became even more self-assured. Even if sometimes I realized I was showing an arrogant disposition, I wouldn't take it to heart, thinking, "I may be a little arrogant, but I'm also right! My intent is only to get our work done

well, so a little arrogance shouldn't be too big of a deal, right?" During that time, I didn't feel comfortable with anything the others did. I felt they weren't skilled enough and didn't see the full picture in their considerations. If their ideas weren't the same as mine, I'd shoot them down without a second thought and look down my nose at them. Once, a video that a sister had produced went through several rounds of editing and still didn't turn out great. Instead of asking her about any difficulties she might have run into, I just started scolding her, "Were you being at all attentive in this? Can't you just look at what others have done and learn from them?" Sometimes, when the brothers and sisters shared an idea for making a video, I'd reject it summarily before I even understood what they were talking about. As a result, the brothers and sisters were all afraid to work with me and wouldn't even dare to send their finished videos for me to watch. Another time, a sister gathered materials and planned a team study session. I gave them a quick glance, and without discussing them with anyone else, totally disparaged the materials she'd found, saying they weren't worth studying. In reality, even though the learning materials she'd found weren't perfect, they would have still been helpful for skill building. A sister later pointed out that my doing things without any discussion with others showed an arrogant disposition. At the time I didn't know myself at all, thinking I'd just failed to ask for input, and that paying more attention in the future would be enough. I even thought, "I'm the one handling and resolving most of the problems in our work. I have final say in most matters, large and small, so without my oversight, our team's work would be a mess. Even though I'm technically paired together with others, I'm really more like the team supervisor." That thought made me feel like I was different from the others, that I was at the helm. It made me even more arrogant. Once, a couple of sisters and I set up an appointment with another

team to discuss work, but something came up at the last minute and I couldn't attend, so I had them go without me. Surprisingly, they panicked as soon as they heard I couldn't go, saying they couldn't take on that responsibility alone, so they'd wait until I had time.

Afterward, a sister said to me, "You have final say in everything for the team now, big and small. When anyone runs into a problem, they don't seek the truth, they just rely on you. They feel they can't do without you. Don't you think you should do some self-reflection? Things can't go on like this!" I couldn't settle my feelings for quite a while after hearing her say that, thinking, "My brothers and sisters feel they can't do without me; everything has to go through me. Isn't that exercising control over the team? That's antichrist behavior! But, my intentions for everything I've done were just to get the work done well. How could it have turned out this way? How can I best understand this?" Feeling confused and negative, I shared my state with God, asking for His enlightenment and guidance. Then, the others sent me a passage of God's word exposing antichrists' dispositions that really fit my state. God says: **"The most common phenomenon of the antichrist's control is that within their sphere of authority, they alone have the final say. If they are not present, nobody dares to make decisions or settle a matter. Without them, others become like lost children, ignorant of how to pray, seek, or confer with each other, behaving like puppets or dead people. ... The antichrist's strategy is to always appear novel and unique and make grandiose claims. No matter how correct someone else's statements are, they will reject them. Even though other people's suggestions are consistent with their own ideas, if they weren't proposed by them first, they will never acknowledge or adopt them. Instead, they will do everything they can to belittle them, then negate and condemn them, persistently criticizing**



**them until the person offering the suggestions feels that their ideas were wrong and admits their own mistake. Only then will the antichrist finally let it go. Antichrists enjoy establishing themselves while belittling others, aiming to make others worship them and put them at the center. They allow only themselves to shine, while others can only stand in the background. Whatever they say or do is right, and whatever others say or do is wrong. They often put forward novel viewpoints to negate others' viewpoints and actions, finding fault with others' suggestions and disrupting and rejecting others' proposals. This way, other people must listen to them and act according to their plans. They use these methods and strategies to persistently deny you, attack you, and make you feel like you're incompetent, thereby making you increasingly more submissive to them, admiring them more and holding them in higher esteem. That way, you become thoroughly controlled by them. This is the process through which antichrists subdue and control people"** (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Five: They Mislead, Draw In, Threaten, and Control People). After reading this, I held myself up to what God said. I'd been responsible for the team's work for all that time, but the others still couldn't do their duties in line with the principles, instead asking me about everything they did. Without me, they didn't dare make any final decisions or communicate with other teams. They were all constrained by me. Wasn't I harming them? What had I done and said that led to this outcome? Whether we were discussing work or talking through ideas, if anyone had a perspective different from mine, I'd find a number of reasons to shoot them down, never fellowshiping on truth principles. I didn't exalt or bear witness to God, I just made everyone listen to me. When I thought something was right, I'd become aggressive and overbearing. I was disdainful whenever I saw gaps in the others' skills, and I was both

overtly and covertly condescending. I wanted to force everyone to listen to me, and if they didn't, I'd stress that I was skilled and understood the principles. After a while of always negating and devaluing others and elevating myself, the brothers and sisters all felt like they were no good, and didn't have a perspective as complete as mine, so they'd come ask me about everything. Really thinking about it, oftentimes the plans they suggested were just fine. Even if they weren't entirely perfect, I still could have helped improve them. But instead, I insisted on emphasizing that I was right and rejected the others' ideas, thinking I did so for the sake of our work. I was so arrogant and lacking in self-awareness!

Later, I read another passage of God's word: **"Once people have grown arrogant in nature and essence, they can often rebel against and resist God, not heed His words, generate notions about Him, do things that betray Him, and things that exalt and bear testimony to themselves. You say you are not arrogant, but suppose you were given a church and allowed to lead it; suppose that I did not prune you, and that no one in God's family criticized or helped you: After leading it a while, you would bring people to your feet and make them obey you, even to the point of admiring and revering you. And why would you do that? This would be determined by your nature; it would be none other than a natural revelation. You do not have any need to learn this from others, nor is there any need for them to teach it to you. You do not need others to instruct you or compel you to do this; this kind of situation comes about naturally. Everything you do is about making people exalt you, praise you, worship you, obey you, and listen to you in all things. Allowing you to be a leader naturally brings about this situation, and it cannot be changed. And how does this situation come about? It is determined by man's arrogant nature. The manifestation of**

**arrogance is rebellion and resistance against God. When people are arrogant, conceited, and self-righteous, they tend to set up their own independent kingdoms and do things in whatever way they want. They also bring others into their own hands and draw them into their embraces. For people to be capable of doing such arrogant things, it just proves that the essence of their arrogant nature is that of Satan; it is that of the archangel. When their arrogance and conceit reach a certain level, they no longer have a place for God in their hearts, and God is put aside. They then wish to be God, make people obey them, and they become the archangel. If you possess such a satanic arrogant nature, God will have no place in your heart. Even if you believe in God, God will no longer recognize you, will view you as an evil person, and will eliminate you”** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. An

Arrogant Nature Is at the Root of Man’s Resistance to God). I learned from God’s word that my arrogant nature was keeping me from coordinating with the brothers and sisters. I realized that this arrogant, self-important nature came naturally, so I didn’t need to do or learn anything in particular, and could still get everyone to listen to me. Thinking about my time doing my duty with the other brothers and sisters, whether we were making suggestions for videos or organizing work, I always thought I had the best ideas. When I noticed that Justin was passive in his duty, I didn’t help him through fellowshipping the truth. Instead, I looked down on him in my heart for having poor caliber and no burden, and just took complete charge of everything, as if I were the only one who could get things done, not anyone else. When I saw areas where others’ skills were lacking, I scorned them for lacking caliber and understanding, as if my understanding were the most accurate, and I knew the principles best. I was always belittling others and putting myself on a pedestal, presenting my thoughts and opinions to them

as if they were the truth. After a while, the others felt like they couldn't do anything themselves, to the point where they came to me for everything, completely relying on me. If I wasn't there, they didn't dare move forward. I read in God's words: **"When their arrogance and conceit reach a certain level, they no longer have a place for God in their hearts, and God is put aside. They then wish to be God, make people obey them, and they become the archangel"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. An Arrogant Nature Is at the Root of Man's Resistance to God). Faced with the revelation of God's words, I felt ashamed and guilty. I realized I had a very serious problem. I put myself up on a pedestal, always thinking I had gifts and caliber, that I wasn't a regular person. I thought I naturally had the material to be in charge, to captain the ship, and that the others lacked caliber and should listen to me. Thinking about these thoughts and ideas of mine scared me and nauseated me. I really knew no shame! We were working together to do our duties, all accepting God's leadership and submitting to the truth principles, but I was making everyone accept my leadership and submit to me. Wasn't I in the wrong, here? I'd become so arrogant that I'd lost all reason. In **"The Ten Administrative Decrees That Must Be Obeyed by God's Chosen People in the Age of Kingdom,"** God says: **"Man should not magnify himself, nor exalt himself. He should worship and exalt God"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God). In my heart, I always felt I stood on a higher level than the rest of the team, always placing myself above the other brothers and sisters. I was standing in the wrong place—I was putting myself on a pedestal. This thought truly alarmed and scared me. I said a prayer right away, "God, I'm too arrogant and self-assured. I offended Your disposition without being remotely aware of it. I'd like to repent, to take the place I should, and do my duty well." My supervisor came to fellowship with me later on. He said a few brothers and

sisters had mentioned they felt really constrained working with me. They said I was disdainful and looked down on others, and always shot down others' ideas, some of them even saying, "I've seen arrogant people before, but never anyone this arrogant." These words went straight to the heart for me. I'd never imagined the brothers and sisters saw me as that sort of person, that I'd constrained them and hurt them so much. For a few days after that, I felt like I had a knife in my heart. Particularly during our work discussion, when no one else dared speak up and the atmosphere was particularly chilly, I felt even more reprov'd. I knew this was entirely due to the constraints I'd placed on them. In my pain and misery, I came before God in prayer, asking Him to guide and lead me to genuine self-reflection and entry.

I read a passage of God's words in my devotionals that gave me a better understanding of myself. God's words say: **"Some leaders never work according to the principles, they are a law unto themselves, arbitrary and rash. The brothers and sisters may point this out, and say, 'You rarely consult anyone before you take action. We don't know what your judgments and decisions are until after you've made them. Why don't you discuss them with anyone? Why don't you let us know ahead of time when you make a decision? Even if what you're doing is right and your caliber is greater than ours, you should still inform us about it first. At the least, we have a right to know what's going on. By always acting as a law unto yourself you're walking the path of an antichrist!'** And what would you hear the leader say to that? **'In my house, I'm the boss. All matters, great and small, are decided by me. That's what I'm used to. When anyone in my extended family has an issue, they come to me and have me decide what to do. They know that I'm good at solving problems. That's why I'm in charge of my family's**

affairs. When I joined the church, I thought I wouldn't have to bother with things anymore, but then I was chosen to be a leader. I can't help it—I was born to this fate. God gave me this skill. I was born to make decisions and to call the shots for other people.' The implication here is that they were destined to be an official, and other people were born to be foot soldiers and slaves. They think that they should get the final say, and that other people should listen to them. Even when the brothers and sisters see this leader's problem and point it out to them, they will not accept it, nor will they accept being pruned. They will fight and resist until the brothers and sisters clamor for their removal. All the while, the leader will be thinking, 'With a caliber like mine, I'm fated to be in charge wherever I go. With calibers like yours, you'll always be slaves and servants. It's your fate to be ordered around by other people.' What kind of disposition are they revealing by often saying such things? Clearly, it is a corrupt disposition, it is arrogance, self-conceit, and extreme egotism, yet they shamelessly show it off and flaunt it as though it were a strength and an asset. When a person reveals a corrupt disposition, they should reflect on themselves, know their corrupt disposition, repent, and rebel against it, and they should pursue the truth until they can act according to the principles. But that is not how this leader practices. Instead, they remain incorrigible, sticking to their own views and methods. From these behaviors, you can see that they do not accept the truth at all and that they are absolutely not someone who pursues it. They do not listen to anyone who exposes and prunes them, and instead they remain full of self-justifications: 'Hmph—this is just how I am! It's called competence and talent—do any of you have those? I'm fated to be in charge. Wherever I go, I'm a leader. I'm used to having the final say and

**making decisions about everything without consulting other people. That's just who I am, it's my personal charm.' Is this not wanton shamelessness? They do not admit that they have a corrupt disposition, and they clearly do not acknowledge the words of God that judge and expose man. On the contrary, they take their own heresies and fallacies to be the truth, and try to make everyone else accept and revere them. Deep down, they believe that they should rule in God's house, not the truth, that they should call the shots there. Is this not brazen shamelessness?"** (The Word, Vol. 6. On the Pursuit of the Truth I. What It Means to Pursue the Truth (1)).

I was embarrassed in the face of this revelation from God's word. Wasn't this exactly how I acted? I had some skills and appeared to have a little intelligence and caliber, so I thought I should have final say. The way I saw it, the other brothers and sisters couldn't do anything well, and I didn't even take it seriously when someone pointed out my problems. I thought I was only arrogant because I had caliber and my suggestions were right. I didn't know myself at all. In fact, there were a lot of times when I didn't see the issue accurately or consider the full picture, like when I dismissed the learning materials my sister gathered as useless, while the others found that they did have some reference value, and gave some good suggestions. And even though I did have the right idea in some things, I still shouldn't have forced others to accept it out of arrogance. I should have fellowshiped on the principles, and on my personal understanding and views. Then, if everyone felt what I said was suitable, they'd naturally accept it. Instead, I was arrogant and self-assured, didn't see the others' strengths, and didn't self-reflect. I was often making internal calculations of which things I'd made the right decisions on, and which issues I'd discovered and resolved in our work. The more I calculated these achievements, the more I felt I was better than the others. My arrogance intensified and I looked down on other

people more and more. I even thought I was made for the role of supervisor, so I was high and mighty, and wanted to have final say in everything. I was so arrogant and unreasonable and hadn't changed my satanic disposition one bit. I couldn't even get along with others normally. What did I have to be arrogant about? Feeling so pleased with myself like that really was pathetic! Looking back on all of it, I saw how aggressive and overbearing I'd been and was filled with regret.

There was another passage of God's words I read later: **“Would you say it is difficult to fulfill one's duty adequately? In fact, it is not; people must only be able to take a stance of humility, possess a bit of sense, and adopt an appropriate position. No matter how educated you are, what awards you have won, or what you have achieved, and no matter how high your status and rank might be, you must let go of all of these things, you must get off your high horse—this all counts for nothing. In God's house, however great these glories are, they cannot be higher than the truth, for these superficial things are not the truth, and cannot take its place. You must be clear about this issue. If you say, ‘I am very gifted, I have a very sharp mind, I have quick reflexes, I am a quick learner, and I have an exceedingly good memory, so I am qualified to make the final decision,’ if you always use these things as capital, and see them as precious, and as positive, then this is trouble. If your heart is occupied by these things, if they have taken root in your heart, it will be hard for you to accept the truth—and the consequences of that don't bear thinking about. Thus, you must first put down and deny those things that you love, that seem nice, that are precious to you. Those things are not the truth; rather, they can block you from entering the truth. The most pressing thing now is that you must seek the truth in performing your duty, and practice according to the truth,**



such that your performance of your duty becomes adequate, for the adequate performance of duty is merely the first step onto the path of life entry. What does 'the first step' mean here? It means to begin a journey. In all things, there is something with which to begin the journey, something that is most basic, most fundamental, and achieving the adequate performance of duty is a path of life entry. If your performance of duty merely seems fitting in how it is done, but is not in line with the truth principles, then you are not performing your duty adequately. So how, then, is one to work on this? One must work on and seek the truth principles; being equipped with the truth principles is what is crucial. If you merely improve your behavior and your temper, but are not equipped with the truth realities, it is useless. You may have something of a gift or specialty. That is a good thing—but only by putting it to use in performing your duty are you using it properly. Performing your duty well does not require an improvement in your humanity or personality, nor that you set aside your gift or talent. That is not what is required. What is crucial is that you understand the truth and learn to submit to God. It is all but inevitable that you will reveal corrupt disposition as you perform your duty. What should you do at such times? You must seek the truth to resolve the problem and come to act in line with the truth principles. Do this, and it will not be a problem for you to perform your duty well. Whatever realm your gift or specialty is in, or wherever you may have some vocational knowledge, using these things in the performance of a duty is most proper—it is the only way to perform your duty well. One prong is relying on conscience and reason to perform your duty, and the other is that you must seek the truth to resolve your corrupt disposition. One gains life entry by performing their duty in this way,

**and they become able to perform their duty adequately”** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. What Is the Adequate Performance of Duty?). Pondering God’s words, I learned that God doesn’t measure whether someone is doing their duty up to standard by how much they appear to have done, or whether it was done right, but instead measures it according to what path they take in their duty, and whether they seek and practice the truth. I also learned that to resolve an arrogant disposition and do my duty up to standard, first I had to set aside those gifts and strengths that I was proud of, and come before God to seek the truth. If I just kept relying on my caliber and gifts to do things, without seeking the truth or following principles, God wouldn’t approve regardless of how much I did. Before, I looked down on the others for lacking skills and caliber. When I saw them make any little mistake or do something imperfectly, I was full of disdain and scorn for them, both openly and internally. But when the videos I produced went back for multiple revisions and the others gave me suggestions, no one looked down on me, but instead patiently told me what needed improving. Also, I hardly ever accepted the suggestions of the people I was partnered with, and though some brothers and sisters didn’t have great gifts or caliber, they sought the principles in their duty, humbly listened to others’ suggestions, and could cooperate in harmony. Viewing my own behavior against theirs, I felt so embarrassed. I saw how lacking I was in my entry into the truth. In my duty after that, when there was a disagreement between me and the others, I practiced putting myself aside, trying instead to seek the truth principles, seeing it as a chance to practice the truth.

Later on, I was discussing an issue with a couple of sisters, and we had different ideas. I thought I had the best idea and was thinking about what I could say to prove that I was right, how to convince them. I suddenly

realized that I was displaying an arrogant disposition again, wanting to use my own opinion to negate others' ideas. I quickly said a prayer, asking God to guide me in setting myself aside and listening to the others' suggestions. I thought of God's word: **"In the church, it is possible that the Holy Spirit's enlightenment and guidance may come upon any one of those who understand the truth and who have the comprehension ability. You should grab hold of the Holy Spirit's enlightenment and illumination, following it closely and cooperating intimately with it. In doing so, you will be walking the most correct path; it is the path guided by the Holy Spirit. Pay special attention to how the Holy Spirit works in and guides those who He works upon. You should often fellowship with others, making suggestions and expressing your own views—this is your duty and your freedom. But in the end, when a decision is to be made, if it is you alone who makes the final verdict, having everyone do as you say and go along with your will, then you are violating the principles. You should make the correct choice based on what the majority thinks, and then make the decision. If the suggestions of the majority do not accord with the truth principles, you should hold to the truth. Only this accords with the truth principles"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Part Three). I saw from God's words that providing ideas and making videos is my duty, but deciding which plan is best isn't up to any one person. The brothers and sisters have to discuss and decide on that together, then go with the best suggestion. I felt really at peace once I put those realizations into practice. Once that video was made, even though the others did end up going with my version, I didn't look down on the two sisters because of that. I felt that through this process, I'd finally practiced the truth without living by my arrogant disposition. I experienced the fact that God doesn't only look at what is right or wrong; what's more important is what

disposition people live by. If someone is right but displays an arrogant disposition, God detests that.

Afterward, when I tried seriously considering other people's ideas, I realized that my brothers' and sisters' suggestions actually had many aspects that could be utilized; they simply looked at things from a different perspective than I did. Before, I'd always thought other people weren't looking at the full picture because I was only looking at things from my own perspective, and hardly ever truly listened to others' ideas. Then, I realized that everyone has strengths, and there are things I can learn from them. I don't want to keep haughtily believing in myself. Instead, I am ready to work well with my brothers and sisters, seek the truth, listen to their suggestions more, and collaborate in our duty to do it well.

## 94. Relying on God Is the Greatest Wisdom

By Ma Hong, China

In the fall of 2011, I met a fellow villager named Fang Min, who had good humanity and was very kind. She had believed in the Lord for more than 20 years, always attending gatherings and reading the Bible. She was a genuine believer, so I wanted to share Almighty God's gospel of the last days with her. At that time, I hadn't believed in God for very long, and I understood very little truth, so I asked a sister, Song Jiayin, to testify God's work in the last days to Fang Min. Through fellowship on God's work in the last days, and by reading His words, Fang Min decided then and there to investigate further. At the time, I was very happy. But a few days later, when I went to visit Fang Min, she told me she didn't want to continue investigating. She said, "I read Almighty God's words and felt they were good, so I called my mother and told her the good news of the Lord's return. My mother said that what you believe in is Eastern Lightning, and that I shouldn't believe it. Our preachers often say God's words and work are all in the Bible, and there are none of God's words and work outside the Bible. They say Eastern Lightning's preaching departs from the Bible, and that it can't possibly be the Lord's return." I saw that Fang Min had been misled and disturbed by her mother and the preachers of her church, so I said anxiously, "If the religious people believe that God's words and work are in the Bible, and that they don't occur outside the Bible, isn't this delimiting God to what is in the Scriptures? Could it really be the case that God can't do new work outside the Bible, and can't speak any new words? God is the Creator, the source of life. He is so almighty, wise, and abundant. Can the Bible alone represent the whole of God? How can God's words and work be only those recorded in the Bible? God's work is always new and

never old. Each stage of His work builds on the previous one, and He does newer and higher work in each stage. For example, in the Old Testament Age of Law, God issued laws to lead people's lives on earth. In the New Testament Age of Grace, however, God did not repeat the work of the Age of Law. Instead, on the basis of His work in the Age of Law, He did the work of crucifixion to redeem all of mankind. Is this new work recorded in the Old Testament? No. Those who kept to the Old Testament didn't accept the Lord Jesus' new work, and they were all abandoned and eliminated by God. The same is true for this stage of work in the last days. Based on His plan for the work of salvation, God does the work of judgment in accordance with people's needs, to completely resolve the problem of people's sin, so that people can be cleansed. Only by following the footsteps of the Lamb and accepting God's new work can we gain God's salvation and enter His kingdom. Your mother hasn't read God's new words—she doesn't understand, that's why she said what she did. You may investigate first. Don't decide blindly. If you miss the Lord's return, you will no longer have the chance to be saved by God.” But no matter what I said, she wouldn't listen. I wanted to ask another sister to fellowship with Fang Min, but she wouldn't agree. She also said she was returning to her hometown in a few days, and had bought a train ticket. I was deeply concerned—she had been disturbed and already started to waver. If she went back to her hometown, wouldn't her pastor and preachers disturb her even more? Fang Min had already decided, however, and I knew she wouldn't listen to what I had to say at the time, so I had to leave.

After I got home, thinking of how little hope there was for preaching to Fang Min now she was leaving for her hometown, I had little faith, and felt preaching the gospel was too hard. The more I thought, the worse I felt. Just when I was beginning to feel negative, I recalled God's words: “**In the**

**Age of Grace, Jesus had mercy and grace for humans. If one sheep was lost out of a hundred, He would leave the ninety-nine to look for the one. This line does not represent a kind of mechanical action, nor a regulation; rather, it shows God's urgent intention to bring salvation to people, as well as His deep love for them. It is not a way of doing things; it is a kind of disposition, a sort of mentality"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Part Three). God's words were very touching. If even one sheep out of a hundred is lost, God will leave the ninety-nine to find the one lost sheep. I saw that God's desire to save people is earnest and sincere. God doesn't want to lose anyone who truly believes in Him, His love for people is so great. As I contemplated God's words, I was ashamed. To save corrupt humankind, God came incarnate to earth and paid a great price, all in the hope that sincere believers in God will come before Him and accept His salvation. Yet when I had encountered difficulty in preaching the gospel, I'd become negative and had drawn back. I had been so inconsiderate of God's intention. Although Fang Min was misled and disturbed, and had some religious notions, she was a true believer in God. I had to do my best to give her fellowship on the truth, to dispel her notions and bring her before Him. This was my duty. I recalled another passage of God's words: **"Man's heart and spirit are held in the hand of God, everything of his life is beheld in the eyes of God. Regardless of whether or not you believe this, any and all things, whether living or dead, will shift, change, renew, and disappear in accordance with God's thoughts. Such is the way in which God presides over all things"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. God Is the Source of Man's Life). God's word gave me faith and strength. All things are in God's hands, including people's thoughts and ideas. To human eyes, Fang Min was now disturbed, would return to her hometown, and the hope of preaching the gospel to her

was slim. God, however, is sovereign over everything. If she was God's sheep, she would understand God's voice. All I could do was try my best to cooperate, and until the end of the matter, I couldn't give up lightly. Once I recognized this, I prayed to God, "God! Fang Min has been disturbed, and now doesn't dare investigate the true way. I entrust her to Your hands. If she is Your sheep, I wish to do my best to preach the gospel to her." After that, I learned that Fang Min believed her train was at 9:10 p.m., but it was actually at 9:10 a.m., so she wasn't able to leave. I saw that people's hearts and spirits are all in God's hands, and it is God who orchestrates and arranges everything. I thanked God over and over in my heart, and I had more faith in preaching the gospel to Fang Min.

After that, I went to see Fang Min, and seeing that she still clung to her notions, I read a passage of Almighty God's words to her: **"Since we are searching for the footprints of God, it behooves us to search for God's intentions, for the words of God, for His utterances—because wherever there are new words spoken by God, the voice of God is there, and wherever there are the footsteps of God, God's deeds are there. Wherever there is the expression of God, there God appears, and wherever God appears, there the truth, the way, and the life exist. In seeking God's footprints, you have ignored the words 'God is the truth, the way, and the life.' And so, many people, even when they receive the truth, do not believe that they have found God's footprints, and still less do they acknowledge the appearance of God. What a grave mistake! The appearance of God cannot be reconciled with man's notions, still less can God appear at the behest of man. God makes His own choices and His own plans when He does His work; moreover, He has His own objectives and His own methods. Whatever work He does, He has no need to discuss it with man or seek his advice, much less to**



**notify each and every person of His work. This is the disposition of God, and it should, moreover, be recognized by everyone. If you desire to witness the appearance of God, to follow God's footsteps, then you must first walk away from your own notions. You must not demand that God do this or that, much less should you place Him within your own confines and limit Him to your own notions. Instead, you should demand of yourselves how you ought to seek God's footprints, how you ought to accept God's appearance, and how you ought to submit to the new work of God: This is what man should do"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The

Appearance and Work of God. Appendix 1: The Appearance of God Has Ushered in a New Age).

After reading God's words, I fellowshiped with her, "If we want to welcome the Lord's return, we must learn to let go of our own notions. You know that God's thoughts are beyond human thoughts. God does not work according to human notions and imaginings. 'All of God's words and work are in the Bible, and none occur outside the Bible'—does this have any basis in God's word? No. The Lord Jesus never said this, nor has the Holy Spirit testified to it. So isn't it based on human notions and imaginings? When the Lord Jesus came to work, the Pharisees didn't look at how much truth the Lord Jesus expressed. Instead, they clung to the Old Testament, thinking that the words and work of the Lord Jesus were beyond the Bible. They used this as an excuse to condemn the Lord Jesus, finally committing the heinous sin of nailing Him to the cross. We need to learn a lesson from the failure of the Pharisees! God's words and work are never constrained by any person or thing, let alone by the Bible. God always speaks more words and does more new work in accordance with His management plan and the needs of humankind. So, to determine whether Almighty God is the Lord Jesus returned, we can't look at whether Almighty God's words and work go beyond the Bible. We must look at whether the words of Almighty God

are the truth and whether Almighty God can do the work of saving mankind, because only God is the truth, the way, and the life, and only God can save humankind. You have read the words of Almighty God, and you acknowledge the authority and power of His word. Moreover, His words reveal God's six-thousand-year management plan, the mysteries of the Bible, who can enter the kingdom of heaven, and the future destination of humankind. No person knows these mysteries of truth, only God could reveal them...." But before I could finish my fellowship, Fang Min interrupted me and didn't let me say anymore. I thought it was because my fellowship wasn't clear, so I wanted Jiayin to give Fang Min more fellowship after that, but Fang Min wouldn't agree. I was very worried. I hadn't believed in God for very long, understood little truth, and fellowshipped on much of it unclearly. I felt like I couldn't resolve her problems. In the face of these difficulties, I wanted to draw back. I thought, "If it really can't be done, then I'll stop. This is too hard!" The more I thought, the more negative I felt, and on the way home, I felt no motivation at all.

At a gathering, the brothers and sisters learned about my state, and they read a passage of God's word to me: **"What does this word, 'faith,' refer to? Faith is the genuine belief and the sincere heart that humans should possess when they cannot see or touch something, when God's work does not align with human notions, when it is beyond human reach. This is the faith that I speak of. People are in need of faith during times of hardship and refinement, and faith is something that is followed by refinement; refinement and faith cannot be separated. No matter how God works, and no matter your environment, you are able to pursue life and seek the truth, and seek knowledge of God's work, and have an understanding of His actions, and you are able to act**

**according to the truth. Doing so is what it is to have true faith, and doing so shows that you have not lost faith in God. You can only have true faith in God if you are able to persist in pursuing the truth through refinement, if you are able to truly love God and do not develop doubts about Him, if no matter what He does you still practice the truth to satisfy Him, and if you are able to seek in the depths for His intentions and be considerate of His intentions”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Those Who Are to Be Made Perfect Must Undergo Refinement).

After reading God’s words, a sister fellowshipped, “If we become negative and draw back when we have difficulties preaching the gospel, it is mainly because we don’t understand God’s intention. Actually, God allows these difficulties to come to us so that our faith can be perfected and we can learn to rely on God, and at the same time, through these difficulties, we can equip ourselves with the truth and learn to testify to God’s work.” Through her fellowship on God’s word, I realized that there are God’s good intentions in the difficulties we face in preaching the gospel. God wants to use this to perfect our faith and help us understand more truth. But when I had difficulties, instead of thinking about relying on God and seeking the truth to resolve Fang Min’s notions and bring her before God, I stayed mired in difficulty, wanting to draw back and give up. I didn’t want to expend more effort or pay more of a price, and I wasn’t considerate of God’s intention at all. When the facts revealed me, I finally saw I had no faith in God whatsoever, and my stature was pitifully small. I recalled God’s words: **“The more that people cooperate, and the more they pursue the attainment of the standards of God’s requirements, the greater the work of the Holy Spirit”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. How to Know Reality). It’s true, the more people cooperate, the more they have the Holy Spirit’s work. Although Fang Min had believed in the Lord

for over 20 years and had knowledge of the Bible, I had Almighty God's word. God's word is the truth and can solve all of people's problems. Understanding this, I was willing to truly rely on God and to pay a price, and do my best to resolve her notions.

After that, I sought with the brothers and sisters who understood the truth about the notions Fang Min held, and they helped me find related passages of God's word. Then, I went to Fang Min's home again and read two passages of Almighty God's word to her: **“Do regulations need to be applied to the work of God? And must God work according to the foretelling of prophets? After all, which is greater: God or the Bible? Why must God work according to the Bible? Could it be that God has no right to exceed the Bible? Can God not depart from the Bible and do other work? Why did Jesus and His disciples not keep the Sabbath? If He were to practice in light of the Sabbath and according to the commandments of the Old Testament, why did Jesus not keep the Sabbath after He came, but instead washed feet, covered head, broke bread, and drank wine? Is this not all absent from the commandments of the Old Testament? If Jesus honored the Old Testament, why did He break with these regulations? You should know which came first, God or the Bible! Being the Lord of the Sabbath, could He not also be the Lord of the Bible?”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Concerning the Bible (1)). **“If you wish to see the work of the Age of Law, and to see how the Israelites followed the way of Jehovah, then you must read the Old Testament; if you wish to understand the work of the Age of Grace, then you must read the New Testament. But how do you see the work of the last days? You must accept the leadership of the God of today, and enter into the work of today, for this is the new work, and no one has previously recorded it in the Bible. Today, God has become flesh and**

**selected other chosen ones in China. God works in these people, He continues on from His work on earth, and continues on from the work of the Age of Grace. The work of today is a path that man has never walked, and a way that no one has ever seen. It is work that has never been done before—it is God’s latest work on earth. Thus, work that has never been done before is not history, because now is now, and has yet to become the past. People do not know that God has done greater, newer work on earth, and outside of Israel, that it has already gone beyond the scope of Israel, and beyond the foretelling of the prophets, that it is new and marvelous work outside of the prophecies, and newer work beyond Israel, and work that people can neither perceive nor imagine. How could the Bible contain explicit records of such work? Who could have recorded every single bit of today’s work, without omission, in advance? Who could have recorded this mightier, wiser work that defies convention, in that moldy old book? The work of today is not history, and as such, if you wish to walk the new path of today, then you must depart from the Bible, you must go beyond the books of prophecy or history in the Bible. Only then will you be able to walk the new path properly, and only then will you be able to enter into the new realm and the new work”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Concerning the Bible (1)). After reading God’s words, I fellowshiped with her, “You believe that since Almighty God’s words and work aren’t in the Bible, He isn’t the Lord returned. This is restricting God to what is in the Bible, which is delimiting God. Did God come first or did the Bible come first? Did the Bible exist when God first created the heavens, the earth, and all things? Abraham didn’t have the Bible. He did not believe in God according to the Bible. Can we say that Abraham didn’t believe in God? We must understand that the Bible is only the historical record of God’s work.

It was created after God completed His work and after compilation by later generations. When the Lord Jesus came to work, there was no New Testament. People had only read the Old Testament. It was centuries after the Lord Jesus worked that the Old and New Testament came into being. This proves that God's words and work came first, and then the Bible was written. This is a fact. God appears and works in the last days, so how could His words and work be recorded in the Bible in advance? If we want to welcome the Lord, we must go beyond the Bible and investigate and accept God's current words and work. This is the only way to follow God's footsteps." After I fellowshiped these things to Fang Min, she seemed to understand some of it, but she was still confused, and said, "What Almighty God says is right. It is true that God's work came first, and the Bible after, and I understand that God is greater than the Bible. But I have been reading the Bible for decades, and I can't simply let go of it. I still need to read the Bible." Then, Fang Min asked me a lot of new questions. My mind blanked out when I heard them—I didn't know which aspects of the truth to fellowship on to answer them. After returning home, I prayed to God, asking Him to enlighten and guide me. I realized then that, even though I couldn't fellowship clearly, I could read her the words of God. So I wanted to fellowship with her again. One day, I went to her home, and saw a Bible and a book of Almighty God's words, both open on the windowsill. I realized that although Fang Min said she didn't accept Almighty God's work, in her heart she wanted to investigate it, and I saw some hope for her.

Later, Fang Min fell ill and was hospitalized. I took time off from my job to take care of her and read God's word to her. The boss saw that I often asked for time off, so he deliberately found excuses to scold me. At first, I was able to bear it. I felt that although I suffered a bit, as long as Fang Min could accept the true way, it would be fine. But after reading God's word to

her several times, she still didn't agree to investigate. At this point, I became discouraged again. I felt that I had paid such a price, but she continued to refuse. How long would I have to preach before she accepted it? The more I thought, the more dispirited I felt, and the less I wanted to cooperate. After that, I read in God's word: **"Are you aware of the burden on your shoulders, your commission, and your responsibility? Where is your sense of historic mission? How will you adequately serve as a master in the next age? Do you have a strong sense of masterhood? How would you explain the master of all things? Is it really the master of all living creatures and of all physical things in the world? What plans do you have for the progress of the next phase of the work? How many people are waiting for you to be their shepherd? Is your task a heavy one? They are poor, pitiable, blind, and at a loss, wailing in the darkness—where is the way? How they yearn for the light, like a shooting star, to suddenly descend and dispel the forces of darkness that have oppressed man for so many years. Who can know the full extent to which they anxiously hope, and how they pine, day and night, for this? Even on a day when the light flashes past, these deeply suffering people remain imprisoned in a dark dungeon without hope of release; when will they weep no longer? Terrible is the misfortune of these fragile spirits who have never been granted rest, and long have they been kept bound in this state by merciless bonds and frozen history. And who has heard the sound of their wailing? Who has looked upon their miserable state? Has it ever occurred to you how grieved and anxious God's heart is? How can He bear to see innocent mankind, whom He created with His own hands, suffering such torment? Human beings, after all, are the victims who have been poisoned. And although man has survived to this day, who would have known that mankind has**

**long been poisoned by the evil one? Have you forgotten that you are one of the victims? Are you not willing to strive, out of your love for God, to save these survivors? Are you not willing to devote all of your energy to repaying God, who loves mankind like His own flesh and blood?”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. How Should You Attend to Your Future Mission?). I could feel God’s urgent intention from His words. For those who live under Satan’s power and have not come before God, God is worried and anxious, and hopes those who truly believe in Him can obtain salvation in the last days. As someone who had accepted God’s work of the last days, I knew I had to bring those who had not come before God into God’s house to accept His salvation. This was my bounden duty. In the Age of Grace, many people were martyred to spread the gospel, and in the end, the gospel was spread to every corner of the world and known to all. I also thought of Noah. To fulfill God’s commission of building the ark, for 120 continuous years he never gave up despite the difficulties, mockery, and slander he faced during that period. In the end, he completed God’s commission and gained God’s approval. Noah had such great faith in God. Although I had some difficulties in preaching the gospel and endured some suffering, these were a far cry from the price paid by saints throughout the ages. I thought back to when my brothers and sisters preached the gospel to me. I had also repeatedly refused them, and they had to preach to me with love several times before I accepted it. Now, with Fang Min, why couldn’t I treat her with more love? She didn’t understand the truth yet, and was in bondage to religious notions, so wasn’t it normal for her to be resistant? I couldn’t give up on her just because it was a little difficult. Once I recognized this, I felt deep regret, and set my resolve before God: No matter what difficulties I encountered while preaching the gospel, I would do my best to cooperate—this was my responsibility and my duty.



Later, I continued taking care of Fang Min, reading God's words to her. One day she said to me, "Through the words of God you've read to me during this time, I understand people shouldn't delimit God to what is in the Bible. God's work is always new and never old, and what the Bible contains is God's past work. If God returned and did the things recorded in the Bible, then God's work would be repeating. It would lose its meaning that way. Only when God does new work beyond the Bible, enabling people to undergo judgment and be cleansed on the basis of accepting the Lord Jesus' work of redemption, can they truly be saved. If I still cling to God's previous work, even if I read the Bible all my life, I will never gain the truth and life. I need to follow God's footsteps and accept His salvation in the last days." When I saw that Fang Min had finally come around, I was very happy. I saw, too, that God's sheep listen to God's voice. No matter how Satan disturbs them or how many notions they have, in the end, they will accept the truth and come before God. After that, Fang Min began to proactively read God's words and attend gatherings, and her illness gradually started to improve. Later, Jiayin gave a lot of fellowship on God's word to address Fang Min's difficulties and notions, and she became certain about God's work in the last days. She said to me, "When you read God's word to me in the past, although I outwardly ignored you, I was actually taking some of it in. I felt Almighty God's words had the truth, but I was afraid to believe mistakenly, so I didn't dare accept it. Now I understand and am willing to accept!" Seeing Fang Min certain about God's work, I was very happy, and felt deeply how God determines the moment when each person returns to His house. As long as we genuinely rely on God, we can see His deeds. Later, Fang Min offered to spread the gospel to her friends and acquaintances. After a period of cooperation, fourteen people accepted God's salvation in the last days.

Through this experience of preaching the gospel, I genuinely saw God's deeds. During this period, although I encountered many difficulties, and sometimes I became negative and drew back, I realized how God had used this to perfect my faith and love, and to help me equip myself with more truth. I also experienced how relying on God and looking to God is the greatest wisdom. From then on, I was even more determined to preach the gospel and testify to God.

## 95. Seeing God's Deeds Through Persecution

By Li Chen, China

In the wee hours one day in July 2018, a sister and I were at our host's home wrapping up a work discussion and about to go to bed, when we suddenly heard prying at the door and the bark of a dog—this made me a little nervous. Right then, seven or eight police officers burst into the bedroom and cuffed our hands behind our backs. Without showing any papers, they started turning the place upside down in a search. They ultimately found over 7,000 yuan in cash and a receipt for 350,000 yuan of the church's money. I was scared—having found the receipt, the police were sure to demand the whereabouts of the money. I didn't know how they'd torture me or if they'd beat me to death. I quickly said a prayer in my heart, asking God for strength and for His protection, so I didn't become a Judas and betray Him. Then a hymn "Life's Testimony" came to mind: "One day I may be captured and persecuted for bearing witness to God. This suffering is for the sake of righteousness, which I know in my heart. If my life is gone like a spark in the blink of an eye, I will still feel proud that I can follow Christ and bear witness to Him in this life" (Follow the Lamb and Sing New Songs). That's true. Having faith is a just thing, so no matter what sort of brutal torture I was to face, it would be suffering for the sake of righteousness. I couldn't be timid or fearful—I had to get through this by leaning on God. With this in mind, I gradually calmed down.

That afternoon, the police took the two of us to a hotel for separate interrogation. An officer by the name of Liu shouted, "Come on, spill the truth about these religious matters! What's the deal with that receipt for 350,000 yuan?" I thought, "That money belongs to the church—it has nothing to do with them. Why would I tell them anything?" So I kept quiet.

Then Officer Liu slapped me angrily across the face, leaving my face burning with pain. He pressed really hard on the pressure points around my neck, but I gritted my teeth in pain and didn't say a word. Then, an overweight officer said, "Here, I'll help you get some exercise." He grabbed my hair and yanked it up and down, making me do squats. After doing so fifty or sixty times, my scalp was smarting and my hair had been ripped out all over the place. Then they brought a chair over and put it behind me with its back against my back. They put my handcuffed arms through a gap in the backrest so they were resting on the seat of the chair. I was sitting on the ground with my legs extended straight out in front of me. They kept demanding information about the 350,000 yuan; when they saw I wouldn't talk, they continued to torment me. After a while, my shoulder joints were in terrible pain from the strain and my back felt like it had been snapped. The latches of the handcuffs were digging deep into my flesh. Trembling all over from the pain, sweating nonstop, I felt like I really couldn't take it any longer. I kept praying in my heart, asking God to give me strength and watch over me so I could stand strong. Just then, I thought of a passage of God's words: **"When you face suffering, you must be able to lay aside concern for the flesh and to not make complaints against God. When God hides Himself from you, you must be able to have the faith to follow Him, to maintain your previous love without allowing it to falter or dissipate. No matter what God does, you must submit to His design and be prepared to curse your own flesh rather than make complaints against Him. When you are faced with trials, you must satisfy God, though you may weep bitterly or feel reluctant to part with some beloved object. Only this is true love and faith"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Those Who Are to Be Made Perfect Must Undergo Refinement). From God's words, I knew that He was allowing Satan to persecute me in

order to perfect my faith and love, and to see if I could stay firm in my testimony and satisfy God throughout my suffering. Satan was tormenting me physically to get me to betray God, and I couldn't give in to it. Once I understood God's intention, I gained internal strength and, before I knew it, I was able to withstand the pain.

The following day, the police kept asking me about the church's money. I still wouldn't talk, so one of them took out a bottle of lacrimator—a liquid that makes you tear up. He shook it in my face, saying, "If this stuff is sprayed on your face, your eyes and nose won't stop running. It hurts like hell. We'll use it on you if you still won't talk." Officer Liu said, infuriated, "Use chili water on her—that'll show her!" After that, they brought a tiger chair in and threatened me, saying, "We're going to put you on this if you don't speak up, and we'll electrocute you to death!" That really scared me—if they really did torture me that way, could I endure it? Then God's words came to mind: **"Do not fear, the Almighty God of hosts will surely be with you; He stands behind you and He is your shield"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Utterances of Christ in the Beginning, Chapter 26). God's words helped me calm down. It was true—I wasn't going through this oppression and hardship alone, but God was by my side; God had my back. No matter how the police tortured me, God would guide me and help me through this difficult time. With God accompanying me, I had nothing to fear. Seeing I still wouldn't talk, the officers took the lacrimator and a plastic bag, and dragged me into the restroom. I could tell they were going to put the plastic bag over my head, so right before they could, I took a big breath of air and held it in. About 40 seconds later, they took the bag off, and immediately sprayed the lacrimator on my face. Because I was still holding my breath, I didn't get choked by it. The two officers got some of it instead, and started coughing. So they put the plastic bag back over my

head, this time for a minute or so. When they sprayed the lacrimator again, it was even more than the first time. Incredibly, however, I merely felt a burning sensation on my neck and face—there was no other effect. The police had no choice but to take me back into the room. I was really moved. I'd truly seen God's work and I felt that God was by my side helping me. After that, they slapped me across the face and pressed on my pressure points. They made me do squats by yanking on my hair, and forced my arms onto the seat of the chair again. They tormented me like that over and over; I stayed strong by continuing my prayers.

By noon on the fourth day, seeing I still wasn't telling them anything, Officer Liu pinched my chin hard, saying viciously, "There's no time limit on interrogation for cases like yours. The national government has decreed that you lot will either be killed, locked up, or forced to repent. We have plenty of time. If you don't open your mouth, we'll really show you this afternoon!" My heart started pounding, not knowing what kind of torture they had in store for me then. I was increasingly nervous. I prayed to God silently and ceaselessly, asking Him to give me faith and strength. Then I remembered His words: **"You will surely, under the guidance of My light, break through the stranglehold of the forces of darkness. You will surely not, in the midst of darkness, lose the guidance of My light. You will surely be the masters of all creation. You will surely be overcomers before Satan. You will surely, at the downfall of the kingdom of the great red dragon, stand up amid the myriad throngs as proof of My victory. You will surely stand firm and unwavering in the land of Sinim. Through the sufferings you endure, you will inherit My blessings, and will surely radiate My glory throughout the entire universe"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. God's Words to the Entire Universe, Chapter 19). God's words gave me strength. God will perfect a group

of overcomers in the midst of the great red dragon's savage persecution, and no matter what pain and hardship these overcomers face, they will be able to submit to God and be devoted to Him, to the very end. No matter how brutal it is, the great red dragon is also in God's hands; it is merely rendering service for God to perfect His chosen people. Whatever horrific torture the police subjected me to, I only had to genuinely rely on God, and trust that He would lead me to prevail over Satan's persecution. Thanks to the guidance of God's words, I no longer felt so anxious or afraid.

That afternoon, the police continued their torture. Officer Liu had been slapping me nonstop, leaving my ears ringing. He took a little pinch of the hair on my temples and yanked it back and forth, then pressed down really hard on the pressure points around my neck, ears, and collarbones. The pain made me break out in a sweat. Another officer took my hair and forced me into squats. He did that 90 times, at least. I'd never imagined that I'd be able to withstand so much, but my legs didn't even go numb. Officer Liu forcefully pressed on the pressure points around my neck, and though it hurt at first, after some time I was able to take it. Exasperated, he said, "You have a hardy constitution!" I thanked God over and over when he said that. It wasn't that I had a hardy constitution, but it was entirely God's protection. After that, they put my arms onto the seat of the chair again. I don't know how much time passed, but the pain in my arms became unbearable, and my whole body was shaking nonstop. Just then, Officer Liu pressed a foot to my face, preventing me from moving. He lifted my face with his foot, put his shoe inside my mouth, and said, "If you still refuse to talk, I'll take off my socks and stuff them into your mouth. And my feet smell terrible." His evil grin infuriated me. I was just a believer—I hadn't done anything illegal, but this gang of demons was torturing and toying with me. I hated them with every fiber of my being. Silently and ceaselessly

I prayed to God, asking Him to give me strength and watch over me so I could stand strong. Gradually, the pain in my arms faded and I was able to sit calmly on the floor. I was incredibly moved—I had experienced once again God’s mercy for me. I was so grateful to God, I couldn’t hold my tears back. Later on, seeing they weren’t going to get any information about the money out of me, they tried to force me to sign a letter of repentance. They said that I’d do prison time if I didn’t sign it, and threatened me: “The misery you’ll face in prison is pretty rough. There’s daily labor, you’ll be beaten and scolded, and the food isn’t fit for humans. It’ll be too late then for any regrets! You’d better give it some good thought. There’s still time for you to sign.” I thought, “My faith isn’t breaking any laws, so I won’t sign their letter. To do so would be to betray and shame God. No matter how rough things are in prison, I’m ready to lean on God and persevere.” So I responded, “I’m not signing.” Furious, they said, “Fine! If you want to suffer, go ahead,” then walked out.

In early August, I was transferred to the local public security authorities in my hometown. The police took me straight to a hotel for questioning. I remember there were six officers who split up into pairs, watching me in shifts and making sure I didn’t sleep. They call this “exhausting an eagle”—not letting people sleep for long periods of time to break their spirits, then interrogating them and demanding a confession when they’re in a confused condition. This is a common form of torture used by the police. At first they mainly tried to brainwash me, talking about atheism and evolution, and telling me all sorts of heresies and fallacies that denied and resisted God. Sometimes they played videos for me that blasphemed God and smeared The Church of Almighty God—it was so nauseating. I argued with them in the beginning, but later on I realized that they were anti-God demons, enemies of God, so no matter how much I said,



I was just wasting my breath. From then on, I ignored them. One of the officers brought something over for me to read that was just blaspheming God. When I refused to read it, he smacked me hard and threatened me with a perverse grin: “If you don’t read this, we’ll take off all your clothing and stick this blasphemy all over your body.” I deeply detested those demons, using such a vile and dirty tactic in their efforts to force me to betray God. I set my resolve, swearing on my life that I would never blaspheme against God. I turned my face to the side and ignored them. While I was in there, the moment I started to nod off, an officer would shout, “No sleeping!” In those moments, I would say a prayer in my heart, silently recite some of God’s words, or sing a hymn to myself, and before I knew it I didn’t even feel sleepy anymore. The longer it went on the more energy I had; the cops, on the other hand, were reaching their breaking point—some of them even became ill. In this way, I made it through eight days of “exhausting an eagle” by leaning on God’s words. I was really moved by this. On my own, there’s no way I would have had any energy after going so many days without sleep. I knew this was entirely God’s work, and I was so grateful for God’s protection. This also strengthened my confidence that I could stand firm in my testimony to God through any further interrogation. Seeing I still wasn’t talking, one of them slapped me angrily, dragged me out of the chair, grabbed my hair, and slammed me into the floor and the wall. Then he grabbed hold of me firmly and pressed his foot down hard on my left leg so I couldn’t move, while another officer kicked my right leg back, forcing me into the splits, with my legs forced apart to about 120 degrees. I cried out from the pain. A whole minute passed before they released me, and one of them threatened me: “If you keep silent, we’ll strip you naked, hang you up, and beat the crap out of you! In China, believing in God is a political crime. In the past you’d have been killed by firing squad, but now we can

treat you like a beast. We can do anything we want to you!” I was so angry when he said that, but also quite worried. I didn’t know how those demons would torture and humiliate me next. What if they really did take all my clothing off and hang me up? In the midst of my pain, I prayed to God incessantly, asking Him to give me strength and protect me so I could stand firm. After praying, I remembered a hymn—“The Kingdom”:

.....

2 ... God is my support, what is there to fear? I pledge my life to fight with Satan till the end. God lifts us up, we should leave everything behind and fight to bear witness for Christ. God will carry out His will on earth. I’ll prepare my love and loyalty and devote them all to God. I will joyfully welcome God’s return when He descends in glory, and meet with Him again when the kingdom of Christ is realized.

3 ... Out of adversity come many victorious good soldiers. We are victorious with God and become God’s testimony. Look to the day God gains glory, it comes with irresistible force. All peoples flow to this mountain, walking in God’s light. The unparalleled splendor of the kingdom must manifest throughout the world. ...

—Follow the Lamb and Sing New Songs

This hymn really stirred up some feelings for me. Experiencing such oppression and hardship in my faith, and having the chance to bear witness to God before Satan, was an honor for me. I thought of back when the Lord Jesus was working; His apostles and disciples endured persecution in their efforts to spread His gospel. Some were stoned to death, some were drawn and quartered, but they all bore resounding witness for God, triumphing over Satan. In the last days, God has become flesh and come to work, to fully save humanity from sin and bring us to a beautiful destination. But the

Communist Party is an evil party that resists and hates God. It doesn't allow people to have faith and worship God, and madly suppresses and persecutes Christians. So many brothers and sisters have been tortured mercilessly after being arrested, but by leaning on God they were able to bear beautiful testimony. I knew I had to follow their example, that I couldn't be afraid of physical suffering and humiliation, but had to stand firm in my testimony and bring shame to Satan.

The police resumed their interrogation a few days later, trying to force me to sell out my brothers and sisters and tell them about the church's money. I wouldn't tell them anything, so they made me sit with my back pressed up against the wall and forced me to do the splits. One officer held my left leg next to the wall and held my arms so I couldn't move, while another kicked my right leg viciously to get it up against the wall on the other side. Sharp bursts of pain were shooting through me. They tortured me nonstop from about 8 p.m. to 11 p.m. I don't remember how many times they did this to me. Finally, they got my right leg against the wall at 180 degrees while I was slumped on the floor, utterly sapped of strength. When the sun rose, I saw that both of my legs were extremely swollen and purple. My inner right thigh in particular was completely purple and even standing up to go use the bathroom was incredibly taxing. Someone had to help me sit down on the toilet. An officer said, trying to scare me, "With your legs like this, if we keep torturing you, it'll be twice as bad as yesterday. It'll hurt more every time. Just confess already!" Seeing I wasn't telling them anything, another officer viciously pulled my legs apart to force me into the splits, and I felt a sharp pain right as they went past 90 degrees. I cried out, unable to take it. He said, "Only that far, and it hurts that much? I'll level with you. This torture is used especially for female special agents. Can your body take it? Give it some thought." Another overweight officer said, "The

people I've questioned before have all been murderers. In the end, they all confessed, crying for their mommies and daddies. They were ready to die before taking that kind of suffering." This was a scary thing for me to hear. Criminals preferred death over his punishment—it must be some horrible torture! The thought of being tortured to the point that I'd be better off dead made my heart start pounding. I was saying one silent prayer to God after another. Just then, I remembered something the Lord Jesus said: **"And fear not them which kill the body, but are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear Him which is able to destroy both soul and body in hell"** (Matthew 10:28). Also, the words of Almighty God: **"When people are ready to sacrifice their lives, everything becomes trifling, and no one can get the better of them. What could be more important than life? Thus, Satan becomes incapable of doing any more in people, there is nothing it can do with man"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Interpretations of the Mysteries of "God's Words to the Entire Universe," Chapter 36). God's words bolstered my strength. The police could brutally torture me, but they could only strip me of my fleshly existence. They couldn't touch my soul. If I betrayed God because I feared physical hardship, I would drag out an ignoble existence as a Judas, and in the end my soul, spirit, and body would all be punished. Satan was using my fleshly weakness to get me to betray God, and I couldn't fall for its tricks. No matter how the police tortured me, even if I was beaten to death, I was determined to stand firm in my testimony and humiliate Satan.

The police kept questioning me over the several days that followed, threatening again to make me do the splits. They said they'd take me to a torture chamber and use every manner of cruel torture on me, and that they wouldn't stop until I told them about the church's information. I recalled the pain of doing the splits—it was like my legs were being forcefully ripped

from my body. I never wanted to bear that agonizing pain ever again. It occurred to me that I'd rather die than bear more of that horrible torture. I went on a hunger strike, refusing several meals in a row. The police screamed at me, furious, saying they'd force-feed me if I refused to eat. Startled, I finally realized that I had to seek God's intention. Just then I thought of God's words: **"The suffering of some people reaches an extreme, and their thoughts turn to death. This is not true love for God; such people are cowards, they have no perseverance, they are weak and powerless! ... Thus, during these last days you must bear testimony to God. No matter how great your suffering, you should walk until the very end, and even at your last breath, still you must be faithful to God and at the mercy of God; only this is truly loving God, and only this is the strong and resounding testimony"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Only by Experiencing Painful Trials Can You Know the Loveliness of God). I saw from God's words that seeking death out of fear of physical suffering was cowardly. Not only would I bring no glory to God that way, but I'd be Satan's laughingstock. God hoped for me to bear witness for Him before Satan, be devoted to Him even to my very last breath, and never give in to Satan. That was a strong testimony with which to strike back at Satan. Once I knew God's intention, I stopped refusing food. But thinking of the prospect of continuing torture at the hands of the police, with no idea when it would all end, I felt some weakness in my heart. Then I remembered a hymn, **"Emulate the Lord Jesus": "On the road to Jerusalem, Jesus was in agony, as if a knife were being twisted in His heart, yet He had not the slightest intention of going back on His word; always there was a powerful force compelling Him onward to where He would be crucified. Ultimately, He was nailed to the cross and became the likeness of sinful flesh, completing the work of the redemption of**

**mankind. He broke free of the shackles of death and Hades. Before Him, mortality, hell, and Hades lost their power, and were vanquished by Him”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. How to Serve in Harmony With God’s Intentions). Pondering God’s words made me think of how, when the Lord Jesus was completing His work of redeeming mankind, He was whipped by the Roman soldiers, had to wear a crown of thorns, and walked step by step in agony to the place of His crucifixion. Ultimately, He shed His very last drop of blood on the cross, enduring unimaginable pain. To save us, God gave up His own life without hesitation—God’s love is so great! But as for me, when I had seen horrible torture that I couldn’t escape, I just didn’t want to suffer any longer. I lost my resolve to bear witness for God. I felt that was really shameful. God was able to sacrifice His life for us, so why couldn’t I offer up myself to repay His love? Sensing God’s love, tears streamed endlessly down my face. I silently prayed, “God, no matter how long or how much I have to suffer, I want to stand firm in my testimony!”

Sitting up from the floor that evening, I felt strength throughout my entire body and I was in much better spirits. One of the police kept interrogating me for information on the church. I told him resolutely, “I’m not going to tell you anything.” He stalked off in anger, slamming the door. Not long after, the police brought in a brand-new interrogation chair, handcuffed me into it, and said the next day would be terrible for me. Late that night I noticed that both of the officers keeping watch over me had fallen asleep, so I decided to try and see if I could slip out of the handcuffs. Surprisingly, they were pretty loose and my hands came right out. I prayed in my heart, “God, is this You opening up a way out for me? I have no idea what’s outside of this room or where I can run to. I’m putting myself in Your hands—please guide me!” After praying I slipped out of the

interrogation chair and got myself to the door. I gently opened it and ran for the hotel entrance. To my surprise, the guards at the door were also bent over a table sleeping, so I left the hotel without incident and made a break for an alleyway. My legs had been pretty badly injured, but in that moment, incredibly, they didn't hurt at all. I just ran for dear life. I was really nervous, afraid that the police would catch up to me and take me back. I didn't know where to go, and I didn't dare go to my brothers or sisters, for fear of putting them in danger. I remembered a house my family had bought recently that the police probably didn't know about yet. I wanted to go there and hide out for a bit, so I quickly ran for home. I wasn't there long before my mom came back. She said nervously, "The police are out there with your photo, asking about you all over the place. You can't stay here—you have to leave right away." This made me really nervous, and my heart was pounding. I quickly knelt down and prayed, "God, I don't know where to go. Please guide me. I don't know if this escape will be successful, but I'm leaving everything in Your hands, leaving it up to Your arrangements. If I can't get away, I'm ready to give up my life to stand firm in my witness." I gradually calmed down after praying. After that, my dad took me out on his electric scooter. Right when we were approaching the back gate of the apartment complex, I saw the police who had been interrogating me not far away, holding a photo and asking questions to passersby. My heart leapt into my throat and I broke out into a full-body sweat. While they weren't paying attention, I got off the scooter and dashed into a nearby building to hide. My dad rode onward, feigning composure. I was praying to God ceaselessly, asking for His guidance. My dad came back to get me before long, saying the police had left. No one was watching the apartment complex's back gate, so I used that opportunity to slip out. After some

setbacks, with the help of my brothers and sisters, I found a relatively safe place to hide.

Later I heard that, the very same day, shortly after I'd left my parents' place, lots of police cars had come and surrounded the apartment complex. They had spent days searching from door to door. They'd turned my parents' place upside down after they found it, and took my dad to the police station to question him about my whereabouts. Not only that, but they'd installed a high-definition camera on the building directly opposite my parents'. The police also conducted a thorough search for me around my grandmother's place. When an older lady living next-door said something quietly to someone standing next to her, the police ordered her to hand me over, then took her to the police station and kept her there overnight. After that they detained my aunt and questioned her about my whereabouts. All of my relatives were under police surveillance. I was so angry when I heard about this. The Communist Party truly is insane—my faith didn't break any laws, but they still wouldn't stop at anything in their attempt to apprehend me. I remembered this from God's words: **“Forefathers of the ancient? Beloved leaders? They all oppose God! Their meddling has left all beneath heaven in a state of darkness and chaos! Religious freedom? The legitimate rights and interests of citizens? They are all tricks for covering up sin! ... Thousands of years of hate are concentrated in the heart, millennia of sinfulness are inscribed upon the heart—how could this not inspire loathing? Avenge God, completely snuff out His enemy, do not allow it to run rampant any longer, and do not permit it to rule as a tyrant! Now is the time: Man has long since gathered all his strength, he has devoted all his efforts and paid every price for this, to tear off the hideous face of this devil and allow people, who have been blinded, and who have endured every manner of suffering and**



**hardship, to rise up from their pain and rebel against this evil old devil”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Work and Entry (8)). God has become flesh in the last days and is expressing truths to save humanity. He has brought us the gospel to be saved and enter the kingdom of heaven, but the Communist Party doesn’t allow people to have faith and follow God. It madly arrests and persecutes Christians, cruelly torturing us, sentencing us to prison, and even leaving us disabled or dead. The Communist Party is an evil demon of the underworld! The more it ramps up its oppression, the more clearly I see its demonic essence, and the more I hate it and rebel against it from the heart. I swear on my life to keep following God.

This experience of being arrested and persecuted showed me God’s almighty rule and His wondrous deeds. In the midst of crisis, God watched over me so that I could triumph over Satan’s brutality. It was also God’s words that repeatedly gave me strength and faith. I truly experienced the power and authority of His words, and felt His love and protection for me. I’m grateful to God and praise Him from the bottom of my heart!

## **96. Reflections on Not Promptly Dismissing a False Leader**

By Cathy, Myanmar

In August of 2021, I was chosen as a watering deacon. At the time, I was both watering newcomers and spreading the gospel. Because I lacked gospel experience, I wasn't getting great results in my gospel work. One day, the leader arranged for Sister Janine to partner with me for gospel work follow-up. Sister Janine quickly got a grasp on the problems everyone was having in gospel work, gathered brothers and sisters together for fellowship and review, and then shared some successful experiences and approaches. Gradually, they became more enthusiastic in their gospel work and they mastered some principles of the work. Before long, more than 20 people in our village had accepted Almighty God's work in the last days, and more and more people were accepting it in other places, too. Soon, we set up a new church. I thought, Janine had believed for so long, had great caliber, and was capable in her work. Since she came, the gospel work had picked up quite a bit. I really admired her. I felt she was a capable worker and that she pursued the truth. She had a good impression of me. She'd say I was responsible and shouldered a burden, and talk up how good my caliber was and how capable I was in front of the others. I was really surprised to hear her say that. It turned out that she thought very highly of me, and it seemed I held quite a place in her heart. I was so happy. Later, I was chosen as a leader, and I was still partnered with Janine in my duty.

In June of 2022, I became a preacher, Janine was chosen to be a leader, and I took charge of her work. But Janine's gospel work wasn't making any improvements and I didn't know why. She wasn't focusing on nurturing newcomers, wasn't gathering with gospel workers, and didn't fellowship on

or resolve the states or difficulties others were in. I was very worried when I saw these problems and sent her a message to find out about her work, and though she read it, she didn't respond. I thought, "You're a leader, how are you being so irresponsible about church work?" I was furious. I really wanted to prune her and expose her problems, but I thought about how well we'd collaborated in the past, what good impression she had of me, and how she said I was a good leader. If I pruned her, would her good impression of me vanish? I felt it was best to keep quiet to protect our relationship. At this thought, I chose to say nothing. I just sent her the responsibilities of leaders and workers to read and informed her of the scope of her responsibilities and the work she was to do to give her a sense of burden. I felt I'd made things clear for her, that she should know what to do next, and that her gospel work should slowly pick up. Yet after a while, her work still wasn't showing results. This really upset me. She hadn't been like this before, why was she this way now? I really wanted to prune her, to point out that she was being irresponsible in her duty and not doing real work so that she'd amend her attitude in her duty soon. But then I thought, "She's always thought of me as a good leader and she's often talked up how much of a burden I have for church work and how patient and compassionate I am. If I expose her problem, her good impression of me will vanish." At this thought, I just said some comforting words to her and encouraged her to find more time for gatherings and to follow up on church work. When Janine heard this, she said she had to mend her attitude toward her duty and expressed that she wanted to do it well in the future. Overjoyed, I thought, "Janine is sure to do her duty well this time. With her leading the gospel workers, their results are sure to pick up." Not long after, my partnered sister told me, "As a leader, Janine doesn't follow up on work or nurture people. She's a leader in name only and never does real work."

She's a false leader. I suggest she be dismissed and another leader chosen. This way, the church's work can pick up." Another sister pointed out to me that Janine not doing real work had already delayed church work, and that she should be dismissed soon. But I still thought Janine was capable and had good caliber, that she was just going through a rough patch with her family persecuting her, and that if she turned her state around, the gospel work would improve. So I put off dismissing her. Later, Janine's performance continued to decline and others kept reporting she was the same as before, saying something nice, but doing nothing. The brothers' and sisters' reports made me very sad and I felt like I couldn't see her clearly. I prayed to God, asking Him to guide me to learn discernment.

Later, I read these words of God: **"How can one judge if a leader or worker is fulfilling their responsibilities, or if they are a false leader? At the most basic level, one must look at whether they are capable of doing real work, at whether or not they have this caliber. Then, one should look at whether they have the burden to do this work well. Ignore how nice the things they say sound and how much they seem to understand the doctrines, and ignore how talented and gifted they are when they handle external matters—these things are not important. What is crucial is whether they are able to properly carry out the most fundamental items of work of the church, whether they can solve problems using the truth, and whether they can lead people into the truth reality. This is the most fundamental and essential work. If they are incapable of doing these items of real work, then no matter how good their caliber is, how talented they are, or how much they can endure hardship and pay a price, they are still a false leader. Some people say, 'Forget that they don't do any real work now. They have good caliber and they're capable. Train them for a while and they are**

**bound to be able to do real work. Besides, they haven't done anything bad. They haven't done evil and caused disruptions or disturbances—how can you say that they are a false leader?' How can we explain this? It doesn't matter how talented you are, what level of caliber and education you possess, how many slogans you can shout, or how many words and doctrines are in your grasp; regardless of how busy you are or how exhausted you are in a day, or how far you've traveled, how many churches you visit, or how much risk you take and suffering you endure—none of these matter. What matters is whether you are performing your work based on the work arrangements, whether you are accurately implementing those arrangements; whether, during your leadership, you are participating in every specific task you are responsible for, and how many real issues you have actually resolved; how many individuals have come to understand the truth principles because of your leadership and guidance, and how much the church's work has advanced and developed—what matters is whether or not you have achieved these results. Regardless of the specific work you're involved in, what matters is whether you are consistently following up on and directing the work rather than acting high and mighty and issuing orders. Besides this, what also matters is whether or not you have life entry while doing your duty, whether you can deal with matters according to principles, whether you possess a testimony of putting the truth into practice, and whether you can handle and resolve the real issues faced by God's chosen people. These and other similar things are all standards for assessing whether or not a leader or worker has fulfilled their responsibilities” (The Word, Vol. 5. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers (9)). God's words made me realize that I could not judge whether or not a leader is competent or is a**

false leader by listening to whether they speak well, or by examining their caliber, abilities, or the number of their good behaviors. The main things to check are whether they do real work, whether they are responsible, and whether they can fulfill the duty of a leader. Janine had some caliber and was a capable worker, but she'd just say nice-sounding things and then not really act or do real work. She wasn't doing the work a leader should be doing. It didn't look like she was doing anything bad or evil, but as a leader, she'd just send out messages and chant slogans. She never really looked into or followed up on church work. She didn't nurture newcomers who were just starting their duties. When others had difficulties and problems in gospel work, she didn't fellowship to resolve them, and she'd often neglect her duty. I warned her many times throughout this period to amend her attitude toward her duty, and although she'd agree to change, she'd just go on as before. Gospel work ground to a halt and other projects weren't getting results. She wasn't self-reflecting, but brushed off brothers and sisters with excuses. It was apparent from her attitude toward her duty and her various behaviors that she was a false leader who didn't do real work, as revealed by God, and should have been dismissed earlier. But I didn't see things or discern people based on God's word. I only saw Janine's brains, caliber, and capabilities. I felt she could do work, but I didn't look at whether she was doing real work or what kind of results she was getting. I still had my hopes pinned on her. I hoped she'd get church work to pick up like before, so I kept giving her more chances. What an ignorant fool I was! My partnered sister had reported Janine's situation to me and suggested she be dismissed, but I was sticking to my views, wanting to give her chances and support her further, so I didn't dismiss her promptly, seriously impacting the church's work. I saw I hadn't been providing good oversight

in my duty, impacting church work. Wasn't this also the behavior of a false leader? I prayed to God, asking Him to guide me to know my corruption.

One day, I read these words of God: **“When a church leader sees brothers or sisters doing their duties perfunctorily, they may not rebuke them, though they should. When they clearly see that the interests of God’s house are suffering, they do not concern themselves with this or make any inquiries, and they do not cause the least offense to others. In fact, they are not really showing consideration for people’s weaknesses; instead, their intention and goal is to win over people’s hearts. They are fully aware that: ‘As long as I do this and don’t cause offense to anyone, they’ll think I’m a good leader. They’ll have a good, high opinion of me. They’ll approve of me and like me.’ They don’t care how much damage is done to the interests of God’s house, or how great losses are caused to the life entry of God’s chosen people, or how greatly their church life is disturbed, they just persist in their satanic philosophy and cause no offense to anyone. There is never any self-reproach in their hearts. When they see someone causing disruptions and disturbances, at the very most they might have a few words with them about it, downplaying the issue, and then be done with it. They will not fellowship on the truth, or point out the essence of the problem to that person, less still will they dissect their state, and they will never fellowship what God’s intentions are. A false leader never exposes or dissects the errors people frequently make, or the corrupt dispositions people often reveal. They don’t solve any real problems, but instead always indulge people’s erroneous practices and revelations of corruption, and no matter how negative or weak people are, they do not take this seriously. They merely preach some words and doctrines and speak a few words of exhortation to deal with the situation in a**

perfunctory manner, trying to maintain harmony. As a result, God's chosen people do not know how to reflect on and know themselves, there is no resolution for whatever corrupt dispositions they reveal, and they live amid words and doctrines, notions and imaginings, without any life entry. They even believe in their hearts, 'Our leader has even more understanding for our weaknesses than God does. Our stature is too small to live up to God's requirements. We just need to fulfill the requirements of our leader; by submitting to our leader, we are submitting to God. If a day comes when the Above dismisses our leader, we will make ourselves heard; to keep our leader and stop them from being dismissed, we will negotiate with the Above and force them into agreeing to our demands. This is how we will do right by our leader.' When people have such thoughts in their hearts, when they have established such a relationship with their leader, and this kind of dependence, envy, and worship has arisen in their hearts toward their leader, they come to have ever greater faith in this leader, and always want to listen to the leader's words, rather than seeking the truth in God's words. Such a leader has almost taken the place of God in people's hearts. If a leader is willing to maintain such a relationship with God's chosen people, if they derive a feeling of enjoyment from this in their heart, and believe that God's chosen people ought to treat them like this, then there is no difference between this leader and Paul, they have already set foot on the path of an antichrist, and God's chosen people have already been misled by this antichrist, and are **completely lacking in discernment**' (The Word, Vol. 4. Exposing Antichrists. Item One: They Try to Win Over People's Hearts). God's word exposed my despicable intentions in my duty. I saw Janine wasn't doing real work, but didn't expose or dissect her problem, or promptly dismiss her. I just indulged her



and gave her chances to repent. But this wasn't because I was considerate of her weakness or wanted to help and support her, my real intentions were to preserve Janine's impression of me as a good leader and to gain her esteem. We'd partnered in our duties before and she'd always had a good impression of me. She would often talk up how responsible I was for church work, and how good of a leader I was in front of the others. If I exposed and pointed out her problems and pruned her, our relationship could be ruined and her good impression of me would be gone. To protect this impression Janine had of me as a good leader, I didn't expose her problems, prune her, or dissect her actions and conduct, which would have made her aware of her problems and let her promptly mend her ways. I just gave her a few words of comfort and advice, encouraged her to attend more gatherings and follow up on work, brushing over things in passing. My partnered sister called for me to dismiss Janine in line with principles several times, but I worried that I'd offend her by doing this, and that she'd no longer have a good impression of me, so I delayed in dismissing her. God exposes that antichrists work and speak for the sake of their name and status, that when they see others violating principles in their duties, they don't point it out to them or prune them. Their goal is to hold a place in people's hearts, gain others' esteem, and bring people before them. I was just like that. To protect the impression others had of me, I disregarded church work, and when I found a false leader not doing real work, I didn't expose, prune, or dismiss her. I did this to hold a place in people's hearts and to make everyone think I was compassionate, patient, and a good leader. I wasn't helping or edifying my brothers and sisters by doing my duty in this way, and this wouldn't make them understand the truth or bring them before God. Rather, it would make them admire and worship me. In this I was misleading people and winning them over, walking the path of an

antichrist. I thought of the antichrists in the church exposed and eliminated one by one. If I carried on like this without repenting or changing, I'd be expelled and eliminated just like them. With this understanding, I prayed to God, asking Him to guide me to reflect on myself.

Later, I read a passage of God's words: **"When something befalls you, you live by philosophies for worldly dealings, and do not practice the truth. You are always afraid of offending others, but not of offending God, and will even sacrifice the interests of God's house to protect your interpersonal relationships. What are the consequences of acting in this way? You will have protected your interpersonal relationships quite well, but you will have offended God, and He will spurn you, and be angry with you. Which is better, on balance? If you cannot tell, then you are completely muddled; it proves that you do not have the slightest understanding of the truth. If you go on like that without ever waking up to it, the danger is great indeed, and if you are unable to attain the truth in the end, it will be you who has suffered a loss. If you do not seek the truth in this matter, and you fail, will you be able to seek the truth in the future? If you still cannot, it will no longer be an issue of suffering a loss—you will ultimately be eliminated. If you have the motivations and perspective of a people pleaser, then, in all matters, you will be incapable of practicing the truth and abiding by principle, and you will always fail and fall down. If you do not awaken and do not ever seek the truth, then you are a disbeliever, and you will never gain the truth and life. What, then, should you do? When faced with such things, you must pray to God and call out to Him, begging for salvation and asking that He give you more faith and strength and enable you to abide by the principles, do what you should do, handle things according to the principles, stand firm in the position you should**

**stand in, protect the interests of God's house, and prevent any harm from coming to the work of God's house. If you are able to rebel against your self-interests, your pride, and your standpoint of a people pleaser, and if you do what you should do with an honest, undivided heart, then you will have defeated Satan and gained this aspect of the truth. If you always persist in living by the philosophy of Satan, protecting your relationships with others, never practicing the truth, and not daring to abide by the principles, then will you be able to practice the truth in other matters? You will still have no faith or strength. If you are never able to seek or accept the truth, then will such faith in God allow you to obtain the truth? (No.) And if you cannot obtain the truth, can you be saved? You cannot. If you always live by the philosophy of Satan, utterly devoid of the truth reality, then you can never be saved. It should be clear to you that obtaining the truth is a necessary condition for salvation. How, then, can you obtain the truth? If you are able to practice the truth, if you can live by the truth, and the truth becomes the basis of your life, then you will gain the truth and have life, and so you will be one of those who are saved"**

(The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Part Three). From God's words I understood the reason I was always safeguarding my status, image, and relationships, and disregarding church work was mainly because I was too influenced by people-pleasers' philosophies for worldly dealings. I was influenced by satanic philosophies like "Keeping silent on the faults of good friends makes for a long and good friendship," and "Stay on good terms with those you can't avoid." I thought that to make others like and admire you, you had to be gentle and kind, and you should never snap at people, that when you saw others' problems, it was okay to just brush over them, that you shouldn't be too severe, and this way, everyone would like

you. I'd lived by these people-pleaser ideas and when I saw Janine not doing real work, I didn't expose, prune, or dismiss her. I'd protected my status and image but because I hadn't exposed Janine's problems or promptly dismissed her, the church's work had been delayed. I'd put my reputation, status, and relationship ahead of my duty and to protect my image and status, I hadn't considered the church's work at all. I was truly selfish and despicable. Living by these people-pleaser ideas had made me more and more slippery and deceitful, and lack any human likeness. God's words say: **"Those who walk the middle path are the most insidious people of all. They offend no one, they are smooth and slick, they are good at playing along in all situations, and no one can see their faults. They are like living Satans!"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Only by Practicing the Truth Can One Cast Off the Shackles of a Corrupt Disposition). God hates and loathes people-pleasers. One can never gain the truth or be saved by living according to people-pleaser ideas. I felt pretty scared at this realization. I knew that I'd transgressed before God and that if I didn't amend this state and truly repent, I would be abandoned and eliminated by God in the end. God's words also pointed out a path of practice to me, that when I want to protect my name and status, I should pray more to God, ask Him to give me strength, so that I can practice the truth, act with principles and learn to do my duty with an honest heart. This not only benefits brothers' and sisters' life entry, but also the work of the church. I prayed to God that I would practice the truth, act with principles, and protect the interests of the church.

After that I read more of God's words: **"Keep abreast of the circumstances of supervisors of different work and personnel responsible for various important jobs, and promptly alter their duties or dismiss them as necessary, so as to prevent or mitigate losses caused**

**by using unsuitable people, and guarantee the efficiency and smooth progress of the work” (The Word, Vol. 5. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers (1)). “Leaders and workers must have a clear understanding of supervisors of different work and personnel responsible for various important jobs. It is within the scope of the responsibilities of leaders and workers to grasp the circumstances of supervisors of different work and personnel responsible for various important jobs. So, who are these personnel? Primarily, there are church leaders, followed by team supervisors and the leaders of various groups. Is it not critical and of great importance to understand and grasp circumstances like whether the supervisors of different work and personnel responsible for various important jobs possess the truth reality, are principled in their actions, and can do the church’s work well? If leaders and workers thoroughly grasp the circumstances of the main supervisors of different work, and make suitable adjustments in personnel, that is the same as them keeping each item of work in check, and it is the equivalent of them fulfilling their responsibilities and duties. If correct adjustments are not made regarding these personnel and a problem arises, the work of the church will be greatly impacted. If these personnel are of good humanity, possess a foundation in their belief in God, are responsible in handling matters, and are able to seek the truth to resolve problems, then putting them in charge of work will save a lot of trouble, and most importantly will allow the work to progress smoothly. But if the supervisors of various teams are not dependable, have poor humanity, aren’t well-behaved, and do not put the truth into practice, and, furthermore, are liable to cause some disruptions and disturbances, then this will have an impact on the work for which they are responsible and on the life entry of the brothers and**

sisters whom they lead. Of course, that impact may be large or small. If the supervisors are merely neglectful in their duties and do not tend to their proper work, this will probably just cause some delays in the work; the progress will be a little slower, and the work a bit less efficient. If they are antichrists, however, the problem will be serious: This will not be an issue of the work being a little more inefficient or ineffective—they will disturb and damage the church work they are responsible for, causing severe harm. And so, keeping abreast of the circumstances of supervisors of different work and the personnel responsible for various important jobs, and making timely reassignments and dismissals upon discovering that someone is not doing actual work is not an obligation that leaders and workers can shirk—it is very serious, very important work. If leaders and workers can promptly get to know the character of the supervisors of different work and the personnel responsible for various important jobs, and their attitude toward the truth and their duties, as well as their states and performance during each period and at each stage, and promptly make adjustments or handle those people according to the circumstances, then work can proceed steadily. By contrast, if those people run amok doing bad things and do not do real work in the church, and the leaders and workers are not able to promptly identify this and make timely reassignments, but wait until serious problems of all sorts have cropped up, incurring substantial losses to the work of the church, before casually trying to handle them, make reassignments, and rectify and salvage the situation, then those leaders and workers are pieces of trash. They are genuine false leaders who must be dismissed and eliminated” (The Word, Vol. 5. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers. The Responsibilities of Leaders and Workers (3)). From God’s words I

understood that a leader is obliged to promptly look into the status of supervisors of various projects and personnel responsible for important tasks and to promptly dismiss or reassign anyone unsuitable they might find to ensure the successful development of church projects. When they find that a supervisor, leader, or worker is not doing real work, impacting and delaying church work, they need to promptly fellowship with them, and if they don't change and aren't even worthwhile for providing service, they need to be promptly reassigned or dismissed. This benefits the church's work. Keep those who are fit for use and dismiss those who are not, provide fellowship and help to those in need of it, prune those who are to be pruned, and nurture those who pursue the truth. Janine had been perfunctory, unburdened, and irresponsible in her duty all along. Leaders had fellowshiped with her for many times, but she never changed. It was seriously impacting church work. She was indeed a false leader who did no real work and she needed to be dismissed immediately, while a responsible person with good humanity needed to be nurtured. This would benefit church work and allow the gospel work to develop smoothly. At this thought, my heart felt completely clear and bright, and I made a promise to God: "When I encounter this type of problem again, I will practice according to principles and fulfill my responsibilities." I also asked God to guide me in practicing the truth.

I later brought up each of Janine's problems with her, exposing her as a false leader who didn't do real work. I saw that she was furious, and I didn't dare say anything more. I thought, "If I expose more of her problems, our relationship will sink into deadlock and the good impression she has of me will be ruined." I then realized I was relapsing into my old ways, so I prayed to God, "God, I want to practice the truth, fulfill my duty, fellowship what I ought to fellowship, and stop caring about the image others have of

me. Please give me the strength to overcome the constraints of my corrupt disposition.” After praying, I continued to fellowship with Janine, bringing up her problems one at a time and exposing her lack of real work. Though she was displeased at the time, in the end she said without my exposure and criticism, she wouldn’t have seen her problems. She admitted the depth of her corruption and said she wanted to change, and that she’d accept however the church wanted to handle her. I thanked God when I heard her say this. Practicing by God’s words, my relationships didn’t fall apart like I’d imagined, and I felt a great sense of peace and ease. After dismissing Janine, we chose another brother to supervise the gospel work. He really shouldered his duty and led the others in spreading the gospel. After a while, the gospel work started to pick up.

This experience made me realize that relying on a satanic disposition to do your duty will not only hurt yourself, but also impact church work. Only doing your duty in accordance with God’s words and the truth principles aligns with God’s intentions.



## 97. How I Changed My Prideful Ways

By Bernard, Cameroon

I used to think of myself as a very smart person, one who could do anything and everything without the help of others. Both at school and at home, I could always jump in with the answer to a question when my brothers didn't know it, and I looked down on them for that. My older brothers said I was arrogant and conceited and that I should consider the feelings of others more, but I thought they were just saying that out of jealousy, so I didn't take their accusations to heart.

In 2019, I accepted Almighty God's work of the last days. Soon, I began to water newcomers who had just accepted God's work. Of the three sisters who worked with me, two of them had only accepted God's work for a few months. The other was Sister Jonna, who assisted me in my work. I was selected as the group leader at the time, which meant to me that I was the best in the group. As we worked together, when they asked "can it be done this way" or "do you want to do it that way," I often shut them down, saying "no, it cannot," or "no, I do not." I felt the work should be done as I instructed. For example, every time after newcomer gatherings Sister Jonna would ask, "Should we ask the newcomers if they understood everything?" I would reply, "There is no need. I already asked them during the gathering. They understand, so we do not need to ask again." When Sister Jonna said, "When you fellowship and bear witness to the truth of God's work, you should speak in more detail. This will help potential gospel recipients quickly determine that God's work is real," I responded without thinking, "I've already said everything. There is no need to repeat it." Sometimes, Sister Jonna would tell me to go learn about the newcomers' situations, but I did not want to. I thought that as the group leader I should be telling her

what to do, and not the other way around. Sometimes, Sister Jonna would ask if the newcomers were certain about God's work. Seeing how she was constantly getting involved in my work, I got angry and said, "You are not the group leader, so you have no right to tell me how to do my job!" At that time, I was very arrogant, not only did I refuse to cooperate harmoniously with Sister Jonna, I wouldn't cooperate with the other two sisters either. I rarely assigned any work to them, instead taking care of newcomers all by myself. Since they had only just recently accepted God's work, I figured there were many truths about visions my sisters did not understand, which would keep them from doing their job well. When hosting gatherings with them, I always spoke a lot and did not give them time to fellowship. I was worried they would not fellowship well and the newcomers would not understand them. In actuality, the newcomers could understand my two sisters just fine. I simply didn't want them to fellowship, because I looked down on them. Once, to give the newcomers a foundation in the true way as quickly as possible, I wanted to fellowship on several more aspects of the truth, but my sisters said, "You can't do that. Our gathering is only an hour and a half. If you fellowship about too much, there will not be enough time for the newcomers to understand everything completely. We can split the fellowship across several gatherings." I was reluctant to accept their opinions at the time, and instead did my best to convince them to listen to me. In the end, they had no other choice but to agree. Later on, we were watering more than twenty newcomers. Almost all of them came to the first gathering, but at the next few I saw that more and more newcomers were absent. In the end, only three of the original twenty-plus newcomers were still coming to gatherings. This had never happened to me before and it made me very confused and negative. One day, the leader asked me about my state. I said, "Not good. The results of my duty have been very poor

lately. At every gathering I properly fellowship with the newcomers, then I ask them if they understand and they always say ‘yes, I understand,’ but now they’re not coming back to gatherings and I don’t understand why.” The leader told me, “You should reflect upon yourself. It could be that you are doing something to make these newcomers not want to come to gatherings.” The leader continued, “Have you asked your three sisters if they have noticed something wrong with your watering content or methods?” I said, “No, I don’t think they would give good advice.” The leader replied, “That’s the problem. You should ask their opinions instead of only trusting in yourself.” When the leader put it like that, it sounded right. It never occurred to me to ask my sisters for their opinions. I always thought I was a better worker than them, and that their ideas were useless.

Then the leader sent me a passage of God’s word: **“When you are cooperating with others to perform your duties, are you able to be open to differing opinions? Are you able to let others speak?** (I am, a little. Before, a lot of the time I wouldn’t listen to the suggestions of the brothers and sisters and would insist on doing things my own way. Only later, when the facts proved I was wrong, did I see that most of their suggestions had been correct, that it was the resolution that everyone discussed that was actually suitable, and that by relying on my own views I was unable to see things clearly and that I was lacking. After experiencing this, I realized how important harmonious cooperation is.) **And what can you see from this? After experiencing this, did you receive some benefit, and understand the truth? Do you think anyone is perfect? No matter how strong people are, or how capable and talented, they still are not perfect. People must recognize this, it is fact, and it is the attitude that people should have to correctly approach their own merits and strengths or faults; this is the rationality that people should possess. With such**

rationality, you can properly deal with your own strengths and weaknesses as well as those of others, and this will enable you to work alongside them harmoniously. If you have understood this aspect of the truth and can enter this aspect of the truth reality, then you can get along harmoniously with your brothers and sisters, drawing on their strong points to offset any weaknesses you have. In this way, no matter what duty you are performing or what you are doing, you will always get better at it and have God's blessing. If you always think you are pretty good and that others are worse by comparison, and if you always want to have the final say, then this will be troublesome. This is a problem of disposition. Are such people not arrogant and self-righteous?" (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Part Three). God's words pointed out my problem. God says: **"When you are cooperating with others to perform your duties, are you able to be open to differing opinions? Are you able to let others speak?"** As I looked at God's questions, I reflected on how I'd cooperated with my three sisters during that time. I refused to accept each and every suggestion they gave me. Even if their opinions were good or correct, I still disagreed because I didn't want them to think I was beneath them. I thought I was the best, and therefore the only one who could give good advice. I was the leader of the group, so they should listen to me, it shouldn't be me listening to them. God's words say that everyone has shortcomings and needs help from others, but I always thought that I was the best, and that I was superior to others. Was this not arrogance and conceit? I saw in God's words that God detests such people.

Later, I read another passage of God's word: **"When work always has to be redone as people perform their duty, the biggest problem is not a deficiency in specialist knowledge or lack of experience, but because they are too self-righteous and arrogant, because they do not work**

harmoniously, but decide and act alone—with the result that they make a mess of the work, and nothing is achieved, and all the effort is wasted. And the most grievous problem in this is people's corrupt dispositions. When people's corrupt dispositions are too grievous, they are not good people, they are evil people. The dispositions of evil people are much more severe than ordinary corrupt dispositions. Evil people are liable to commit evil deeds, they are liable to disrupt and disturb the work of the church. All that evil people are capable of when they perform a duty is to do things badly and mess things up; their laboring is more trouble than it's worth. Some people are not evil, but they perform their duty according to their own corrupt dispositions—and they, likewise, are incapable of performing their duty properly. In sum, corrupt dispositions are extremely obstructive to people performing their duty properly. Which aspect of people's corrupt dispositions, would you say, has the greatest impact on the effectiveness with which they perform their duty? (Arrogance and self-righteousness.) And what are the chief manifestations of arrogance and self-righteousness? Making decisions alone, going your own way, not listening to other people's suggestions, not consulting with others, not cooperating harmoniously, and always trying to have the final say on things. Even though a good few brothers and sisters may be cooperating to perform a particular duty, each of them attending to their own task, certain group leaders or supervisors always want to have the final say; whatever they are doing, they never cooperate harmoniously with others, and they do not engage in fellowship, and they rashly do things without reaching consensus with others. They make everyone listen only to them, and herein is the problem” (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. The Proper Fulfillment of Duty Requires Harmonious Cooperation). These

words of God touched me deeply. I did not understand why I could not do my duty effectively before. Only after reading God's word did I understand it was because my arrogant disposition made it impossible for me to cooperate with others. During my time working with the three sisters, I always had the final say. This was apparent every time we discussed the content of an upcoming gathering: Everyone would give their views and opinions, after which we should have chosen the main theme of the gathering together to ensure that it would be effective. Instead, I made my own decisions without ever taking their opinions into account, because I thought my opinion was best and I didn't need to listen to others. When anyone raised an objection, I found various reasons to refuse it. I was too arrogant to accept other people's advice, so my duty lacked God's guidance and was therefore not effective. To me, this failure was a revelation.

One day, a sister sent me two passages of God's word. God says: **"If, in your heart, you truly understand the truth, then you will know how to practice the truth and submit to God, and will naturally embark on the path of pursuing the truth. If the path you walk is the right one, and in line with God's intentions, then the work of the Holy Spirit will not leave you—in which case there will be less and less chance of you betraying God. Without the truth, it is easy to do evil, and you will do it despite yourself. For example, if you have an arrogant and conceited disposition, then being told not to oppose God makes no difference, you can't help yourself, it is beyond your control. You would not do it on purpose; you would do it under the domination of your arrogant and conceited nature. Your arrogance and conceit would make you look down on God and see Him as being of no account; they would cause you to exalt yourself, constantly put yourself on display; they would make you scorn others, they would leave no one in your heart but**

**yourself; they would rob you of God's place in your heart, and ultimately cause you to sit in the place of God and demand that people submit to you, and make you venerate your own thoughts, ideas, and notions as the truth. So much evil is done by people under the dominance of their arrogant and conceited nature! To resolve the problem of doing evil, they must first resolve their nature. Without a change in disposition, it would not be possible to bring a fundamental resolution to this problem"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days.

Only by Pursuing the Truth Can One Achieve a Change in Disposition). **"You must remember: Performing your duty is not a matter of engaging in your own enterprise or your own management. This is not your personal work, it is the work of the church, and you only contribute the strengths you have. What you do in God's management work is but a small part of man's cooperation. Yours is just a minor role in some corner. That is the responsibility you bear. In your heart, you should have this reason. And so, no matter how many people are performing their duties together, or what difficulties they face, the first thing everyone should do is pray to God and fellowship together, seek the truth, and then determine what the principles of practice are. When they perform their duties in this way, they will have a path to practice. Some people are always trying to show off, and when given responsibility for a job, they always want to have the final say. What kind of behavior is this? This is being a law unto oneself. They plan what they do on their own, without informing others, and do not discuss their opinions with anyone; they neither share them with anyone nor open them up but keep them hidden in their hearts. When the time comes to act, they always want to amaze others with their brilliant feats, to give everyone a big surprise, so that others will think**

**highly of them. Is that performing their duty? They are trying to show off; and when they have status and renown, they will begin to run their own operation. Are such people not possessed of wild ambitions? Why would you not tell anyone what you are doing? As this work is not yours alone, why would you act without discussing it with anyone and make decisions on your own? Why would you act in secret, operating in a black box, so that no one knows about it? Why would you always try to make people heed you alone? Clearly you view this work as your own personal work. You are the boss, and everyone else is a worker—they all work for you. When you constantly have this mindset, is this not trouble? Is what this kind of person reveals not the very disposition of Satan? When people like this perform a duty, sooner or later they will be eliminated”** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. The Proper Fulfillment of Duty Requires Harmonious Cooperation).

Only by reading God’s word did I realize that arrogance had become my nature, and what I naturally revealed. The moment I had some status in the church, I wanted to use it as an opportunity to show off my abilities. I wanted to prove that I was the best and that picking me as group leader was the right choice. I also wanted to prove to my partners that I was better than them and I didn’t need their advice or help. Because of my arrogance, I always thought I knew everything and that it was useless to listen to anybody else. I treated my own thoughts as if they were truth, made others do things as I wanted them done, and didn’t seek the truth or rely on God in my duty. Instead, I relied on my own experience and intelligence to water newcomers, forcing others to obey me. I lived trapped in my arrogant disposition, didn’t accept the truth, and made others listen to me. Isn’t that Satan’s disposition? Before I believed in God, I was already a very arrogant person. I looked down on people who were inferior to me, including my brothers. I remember when I



was a child my father would scold me loudly when I didn't test highest in my class, "You have to get the highest score on your exams, ahead of everyone else!" My grandmother also used to tell me, "You have to strive to be the best, that's the only way you'll get respect!" Because of this, I always tried to stand above everyone else and be number one. To me, that was the only way I could show others I was the best. I thought listening to others made me look bad, so I didn't want to take advice from them. Only from God's word did I realize that this view was entirely wrong. I always put myself above others and refused to listen to anyone else, and that is Satan's disposition. If I didn't change, I would not only fail to achieve good results in my duty, I would do evil and resist God. In the end, I would be eliminated by God. Reading God's word also made me understand that doing my duty is not my personal enterprise, it is the church's work and I should do this work according to God's requirements. When I encounter difficulties, I should work with others and we should seek the truth together to overcome them. Before making a decision, I should also seek advice from others. If I did not consider the opinions of others and always acted unilaterally, delaying the church's work, then doing my duty in this way was not preparing good deeds, but instead evil deeds. At this realization, I wanted to change my attitude toward my duty and be able to cooperate harmoniously with my brothers and sisters.

During my devotionals, I saw another passage of God's word: **"What do you say, is it hard to cooperate with other people? It isn't, actually. You could even say it is easy. But why do people still feel this to be difficult? Because they have corrupt dispositions. For those who possess humanity, conscience, and reason, cooperating with others is relatively easy, and they can feel that this is something joyful. This is because it is not easy for anyone to accomplish things on their own, and**

**whatever the field they're involved in, or what they're doing, it is always good to have someone there to point things out and offer assistance—much easier than doing it by themselves. Also, there are limits to what people's caliber is capable of or what they themselves can experience. No one can be a master of all trades: It is impossible for one person to know everything, to be capable of everything, to accomplish everything—that is impossible, and everyone should possess such reason. And so, no matter what you do, whether it be important or not, you will always need someone there to help you, to give you pointers and advice, or to do things in cooperation with you. This is the only way to ensure that you will do things more correctly, make fewer mistakes and be less likely to go astray—it is a good thing”** (The Word, Vol.

4. Exposing Antichrists. Item Eight: They Would Have Others Submit Only to Them, Not the Truth or God (Part One)). After contemplating God's word, I understood that only by cooperating with others could I truly fulfill my duties and live out normal humanity. I used to think that because some of my partners had only accepted God's work for a few months and just started watering newcomers, there were many things they didn't understand, while I, on the other hand, had believed in God for three years and had more experience than them, so I never accepted their suggestions and opinions. Only now did I see that this view was wrong. Although I believed in God for longer and had more experience than them, that didn't mean I was better than them at everything. Without cooperating with my brothers and sisters, it was impossible for me to perform my duty well. For example, I didn't have a strong understanding of certain truths, causing me to fellowship badly at some gatherings. I needed a partner to help elaborate for the fellowship to be clear. Sometimes, newcomers couldn't come to gatherings due to illness or work, and I couldn't find any of God's word that applied to their

situations, so I also needed my partners' assistance. In truth, everyone has the chance to be enlightened by God. God didn't only enlighten me. I thought too highly of myself and thought of others as idiots. This was a mistake, and it was foolish. God's enlightenment and guidance don't depend on how much work experience we have, it depends on whether we can seek and accept the truth. In actuality, everyone has their own strengths, just like Sister Jonna, who bore a burden in her duty and often gave good suggestions. I should have cooperated with my sister and learned from her strengths to make up for my shortcomings.

Later, I tried to listen to the opinions of the sisters I was partnered with in my duty. At the end of every gathering, when my sisters asked me to ask the newcomers individually if they understood the content of that day's gathering, I did as they suggested and no longer resisted as I used to. When they asked me to fellowship with the newcomers in more detail to try and alleviate their confusion, I did that as well. Sometimes, they also gave me some ideas for better watering the newcomers, and after accepting them, I carried them out. After practicing in this way, I saw more newcomers attending gatherings, and this made me very happy. I thought of God's words: **"The Holy Spirit not only works in certain people who are used by God, but, furthermore, in the church. He could be working in anyone. He may work in you during the present time, and you will experience this work. During the next period, He may work in someone else, in which case you must haste to follow; the more closely you follow the present light, the more your life can grow. No matter what manner of person someone is, if the Holy Spirit works in them, then you must follow. Take in their experiences through your own, and you will receive even higher things. In so doing you will progress more quickly. This is the path of perfection for man and the means by which life**

**grows”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Those Who Submit to God With a True Heart Shall Surely Be Gained by God). God’s words made me understand even more clearly that I can’t be arrogant and conceited and insist on my way while doing my duty. Instead, I must listen to the advice of others more. This is because the Holy Spirit enlightens and illuminates everyone. No matter how long a person has believed in God or whether they have status, as long as what they say is in line with the truth, we should accept and submit. If we refuse to listen, we will not receive God’s guidance in our duty. Through this experience, I learned the importance of cooperating harmoniously with my brothers and sisters and not insisting on my own way in my duty.

## 98. The Persecution I've Suffered for Faith

By Zhao Ming'en, China

It was after 8 o'clock one evening, during May 2003, and I'd just come home from my duty. Three police officers burst in, grabbed me by the arms and handcuffed me. My heart was pounding with fear. One of them searched me and confiscated my pager. "What law have I broken?" I asked. "Why are you arresting me?" He said with a grim look on his face, "The state does not permit your faith in Almighty God. It's against Communist Party policy. That means you're getting arrested!" With no further explanation they shoved me into their car. Stuffed in the back seat, I was nervous and frightened, having no idea what cruelties awaited me. I was worried, being of small stature, that I wouldn't be able to withstand torture, and that I'd be a Judas and sell out the brothers and sisters. I silently prayed to God again and again, asking Him to watch over me and give me faith and strength. Then I remembered something from God's words: **"You know that all things in the environment that surrounds you are there by My permission, all planned by Me. See clearly and satisfy My heart in the environment I have given to you. Do not fear, the Almighty God of hosts will surely be with you; He stands behind you and He is your shield"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Utterances of Christ in the Beginning, Chapter 26). God's words bolstered my faith and courage. My arrest had happened with God's permission and the police were in God's hands. With God behind me, there was nothing to be afraid of. I didn't feel so afraid when I thought about it that way, and I secretly resolved that no matter how the police tortured me, I would never sell out the brothers and sisters or betray God.

When we got to the police station, a female officer strip-searched me and then took me into another room, handcuffing me to a heating pipe behind my back. Sometime after 11 p.m., the police found a few books of God's words in my house along with several pagers. Chief Li of the Criminal Police Brigade asked me, holding the pagers, "Who gave you these? Who have you been in contact with?" When I didn't respond, he viciously smacked me a couple of times. I saw stars and my face burned with pain. Then he stomped hard on my big toes, which hurt like being stabbed with a needle. I was in such pain I broke out into a full body sweat. Incensed, I said to him, "I'm a believer on the right path in life. What law does that break? Isn't freedom of belief permitted by law in China? What right do you have to arrest me and beat me?" One of the officers said, "You're so naïve! Freedom of belief is a front to appease foreigners. The Communist Party is atheist, so the country wants to suppress and eradicate you believers! If you don't tell us what you know, you'll be dead meat tomorrow. You may have come in here on your feet, but you'll be leaving on your back!" At that, they left the room. I was thinking that since they had found so many things at my house, there was no way they would simply let me go. I had no idea what tortures they would inflict upon me if I kept quiet. They even said I'd be dead meat—they were going to kill me. This made me really anxious, so I said a prayer, asking God for faith and strength. The next morning, four officers came in with a tiger chair. Officer Li said with a demonic look, "I'll show you what you get for not talking! Today you get a taste of the tiger chair!" Then they pushed me down onto the chair and cuffed my hands inside the metal hoops, with my palms facing up. I was seated in the chair with my body tilted back, my feet stretched and tensed downward, and the handcuffs digging painfully into my wrists. My hands soon swelled up like balloons. They turned purple and became

completely numb. The day went by. My body turned ice-cold and my hands became more and more swollen. I was getting increasingly worried, and frightened: If this went on, would it cripple my hands? And if so, how would I get by after this? The more I thought about it the more distressed I got. I had no idea when this misery would come to an end. I prayed, “Oh God, I’m really suffering. Please give me strength and guidance to stand strong.” And then, I thought of something God said: **“While undergoing trials, it is normal for people to be weak, or to have negativity within them, or to lack clarity on God’s intentions or their path for practice. But in any case, you must have faith in God’s work, and not deny God, just like Job. ... People are in need of faith during times of hardship and refinement, and faith is something that is followed by refinement; refinement and faith cannot be separated”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Those Who Are to Be Made Perfect Must Undergo Refinement). God’s words gave me strength—through this pain and torment, I had to have faith in God. The police were torturing me, trying to exploit the weakness of my own flesh to beat me down, to make me betray God. God was also using this situation to perfect my faith and my resolve to withstand suffering. Absolutely everything is in God’s hands and under His rule, including whether or not my hands would be left maimed. I had to have faith in God, and lean on Him to stand firm in my witness for Him. This thought left me feeling stronger, and before I knew it, the pain in my hands faded. I thanked God from the bottom of my heart!

The police started questioning me again on the morning of the third day. One of them pointed at me and said, “Don’t think we know nothing. We’ve been watching your house for over two months now. You’ve got quite a few people coming and going!” Then he reeled off what the people who had gone to my house were wearing, how tall they were and what kind

of bicycles they had ridden. I was stunned. They'd had my house under surveillance for a while, and the people they'd described were all church leaders or deacons. I couldn't sell out any of the brothers or sisters, but the police already had a good grasp of the situation, and they definitely weren't going to let me go if I said nothing at all. I had no idea what tortures they had in store for me. Maybe I should say just a little bit? I had already been in custody for three days, so my own sisters must have learned about it and be in hiding. I figured the police wouldn't be able to find them, so I said, "The visitors were my sisters." Then the officer asked, "Are they believers?" Without giving it much thought, I said, "They're not true believers." Right after I said that, the police went out to get my sisters. I felt so guilty. How could I have admitted that they were believers? Didn't selling out my own sisters, so that I could suffer less, make me a Judas? If they were arrested and then other brothers and sisters were implicated, wouldn't that cause greater harm to the church's work? And even if they weren't arrested this time, there was no way the police would just let them off. They were bound to live a life on the run. The more I thought about it the worse I felt, and then I remembered these words from God: **"Toward those who showed Me not the slightest loyalty during times of tribulation, I shall be merciful no more, for My mercy only extends so far. I have no liking, furthermore, for anyone who has once betrayed Me, much less do I like to associate with those who sell out the interests of their friends. This is My disposition, regardless of who the person may be. I must tell you this: Anyone who breaks My heart shall not receive clemency from Me a second time, and anyone who has been faithful to Me shall forever remain in My heart"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Prepare Sufficient Good Deeds for Your Destination). God's words of judgment left me feeling worse. God's righteous disposition



tolerates no offense. God spurns those who betray Him. I'd sold out two sisters of mine, behaving like a shameful Judas and losing my testimony. I hated myself for being so selfish and vile, so lacking in humanity. I prayed and repented to God in my heart, and swore that I wouldn't sell out any more brothers or sisters, no matter how the police interrogated and tortured me. That evening, Officer Li brought over 13 photographs to have me identify the people in them. I said I didn't recognize any of them. Then he got out a photo of another sister and said, "You know her, right? She said she knows you." I was thinking that even if she had said she knew me, I couldn't say that I knew her. I'd already told them about two sisters of mine, so I couldn't sell anyone else out and have them be tortured like me. I said firmly, "I don't know her." Officer Li shouted, "If you don't talk, you'll have a hard time tomorrow!"

The afternoon of the fourth day, an officer came in carrying four battens, each more than an inch thick and a foot long, then closed the gratings over the windows so I couldn't see anything in the room. My heart leapt into my throat, my pulse was racing, and my legs went weak. I didn't know what means they were going to use to torture me or whether I'd be able to take it. I called out to God in my heart over and over, asking Him to protect me so that I could stand strong. A little while later six officers came in, released me from the tiger chair, and handcuffed my hands behind my back. Two of them stood at a table and lifted me by the handcuffs while yelling, "Talk! Who's your leader?" My feet were off the ground and my head was facing down; my body was suspended in the air and I was gritting my teeth in pain. Seeing I wasn't saying anything, two of the officers started forcefully scraping the sides of my ribs with the battens while two others were using battens to beat me on the arms and legs forcefully. It felt like the flesh was being torn from my ribcage and my legs were being

ripped off. I was sweating from the pain. As they did this they said, “We’ll beat you harder if you don’t talk!” I kept on gritting my teeth and didn’t say a word. A couple of officers took a hard object and jabbed it into my toenails, which was agony. At the same time they shone a powerful light on my hands which made them feel like they were on fire, burning with pain. Feeling like I couldn’t physically take any more, I called out to God over and over, asking Him to give me strength. When they yanked me upward by the handcuffs again, I heard a cracking sound from my arms and yelled out in pain, and only then did they let me down. They had kept me suspended for over an hour. After they let me down I had no feeling in my legs whatsoever. It was impossible to stay standing. My arms and legs were black and blue and burning with pain. The flesh around my ribs also felt like it was on fire, and the pain was excruciating. I slumped to the floor unable to move, feeling devoid of strength and like I’d completely fallen apart. It was agony. The thought of not knowing how the police would further torture me, or whether I could take it, left me feeling miserable and weak. I wanted to commit suicide by biting off my tongue so that at least I wouldn’t sell out the brothers and sisters. I bit down really hard, but it was so painful that I couldn’t bear to go through with it. Then I thought, maybe I could rip out my uvula so that it was impossible for me to speak. I told them I needed to go to the restroom. In the restroom the officer keeping an eye on me heard the sound of me picking at my tongue and gagging and said, “Don’t do anything stupid,” then took me back in and handcuffed me to the tiger chair again. Only then did I realize that I’d almost done something really foolish, and I thought of something God said: **“During these last days you must bear testimony to God. No matter how great your suffering, you should walk until the very end, and even at your last breath, still you must be faithful to God and at the mercy of God; only**

**this is truly loving God, and only this is the strong and resounding testimony”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Only by Experiencing Painful Trials Can You Know the Loveliness of God). **“Do not be discouraged, do not be weak, and I will make things clear for you. The road to the kingdom is not so smooth; nothing is that simple! You want blessings to come to you easily, do you not? Today, everyone will have bitter trials to face. Without such trials, the loving heart you have for Me will not grow stronger and you will not have true love for Me. Even if these trials consist merely of minor circumstances, everyone must pass through them; it’s just that the difficulty of the trials will vary from one person to another”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Utterances of Christ in the Beginning, Chapter 41). I understood from God’s words that when faced with the cruelty of demons, God’s intention is to perfect our faith and devotion, and to have us clearly see how the great red dragon works against God and brutalizes humans, so that we hate and reject it from the bottom of our hearts and stand firm in our witness for God before Satan. But my faith in God was too small, and after suffering a bit of torment I wanted to escape it through death. How was that any kind of testimony? Thinking about it that way, I didn’t feel as miserable anymore, and I had more faith. No matter how they tortured me, even to my very last breath, I wanted to lean on God, stand firm in my witness for Him, and shame Satan. I would never sell out my brothers and sisters and betray God. After I had that resolve, the police didn’t come question me again. Through this experience, I saw God’s sovereignty and almightiness, and saw that the great red dragon is just a pawn in His hands. It’s a tool God uses to perfect His chosen people. I also saw that God was by my side throughout this torment. He was always with me, guiding me and helping me with His words, giving me faith and

strength. I could feel God's love and protection, and I thanked Him from the heart.

The Communist Party sentenced me to three years of reeducation through labor for "disrupting social order." I had to do 12 to 14 hours of hard labor every day at the labor camp, and had to work even longer if I hadn't completed my tasks. I was assigned to work in a pesticide factory. Since I couldn't smell the pesticides, I had headaches and was nauseous every day, and couldn't eat or sleep well. I applied to be transferred to a different factory, but the police wouldn't give approval. I was really miserable at the time, and when I thought of spending three years there, over one thousand days and nights, I just didn't know how I would get through it. Whenever I was on my way to work and saw people outside, free and easy, while I was like a bird in a cage, I felt particularly miserable and wanted to cry. Another sister who was working in the same factory fellowshipped with me, and we quietly sang a hymn of God's words **"Song of the Overcomers"** together: **"Have you ever accepted the blessings that you were given? Have you ever sought the promises that were made for you? You will surely, under the guidance of My light, break through the stranglehold of the forces of darkness. You will surely not, in the midst of darkness, lose the guidance of My light. You will surely be the masters of all creation. You will surely be overcomers before Satan. You will surely, at the downfall of the kingdom of the great red dragon, stand up amid the myriad throngs as proof of My victory. You will surely stand firm and unwavering in the land of Sinim. Through the sufferings you endure, you will inherit My blessings, and will surely radiate My glory throughout the entire universe"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. God's Words to the Entire Universe, Chapter 19). Singing this hymn was heartening for me. This persecution gave me a chance to bear

witness for God—this was an honor for me. The Communist Party wanted to destroy both my body and mind, so that I would betray God because I couldn't endure the suffering. I couldn't fall for its trick. No matter how miserable or difficult it was, I had to lean on God, stand firm, and shame Satan. From then on, in the evenings, that sister and I would secretly hum hymns of God's words together and fellowship on God's words whenever we had the chance. Gradually, I no longer felt so miserable.

Later on my husband came to visit me, and I realized he was in poor health when I saw he wasn't able to move his legs and feet freely. After my arrest, my husband was struggling to eat and sleep, afraid I would be tortured, and ended up getting a cerebrovascular disease. When he went to the doctor, they said he'd had cerebellar atrophy, leaving him partially paralyzed. This was heartbreaking for me, and I hated the Communist Party, that pack of demons, with all my heart. If not for them arresting and persecuting believers, I never would have been arrested and my husband wouldn't have fallen sick. Not long after that, my brother-in-law came to see me and told me that my husband's condition had gotten worse, and he'd become incontinent. This was very distressing, and all I could think about was when I would get out of prison so I could go back home and take care of him. Then, in late 2004, I received a letter from the family saying that he had further declined and had passed away. Hearing this, I felt like the sky had come crashing down. I was in agony. The pillar of our family was gone. Our son was still at university, and I didn't know how he was doing. Because of Communist Party persecution, our perfectly good family was ruined and my husband was dead. I was feeling really weak and before I knew it, I felt grievances rise up within me. Why was disaster always befalling me? Why wasn't God protecting me? In my pain, I remembered these words from God: **"If you pander to the weaknesses of the flesh and**

**say that God goes too far, then you will always feel in pain, and will always be depressed, and you will be unclear about all of the work of God, and it will seem as if God is not sympathetic to man's weakness at all and unaware of man's difficulties. And thus you will always feel miserable and alone, as if you have suffered great injustice, and at this time you will begin to complain"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God.

Only Loving God Is Truly Believing in God). God's words revealed my state. When my husband passed away, I didn't seek God's intention, but pandered to my flesh. I felt that without my husband, there was no one to look after our child and I blamed God. I really had no conscience! It was clearly the Communist Party's persecution that had torn my family apart and left my husband dead, but I put it all on God. Wasn't I distorting the facts and being so utterly unreasonable? At that point I saw that I really was of small stature and that I didn't have true faith in or true submission to God. I said a prayer in my heart, "God, being exposed this way, I can see how rebellious I am. I only ever think about my own flesh, and I don't understand Your heart at all. God, please guide me to submit through this situation, and to know Your intention." Then these words of God came to mind: **"You are a created being—you should of course worship God and pursue a life of meaning. If you do not worship God but live within your filthy flesh, then are you not just a beast in human attire? Since you are a human being, you should expend yourself for God and endure all suffering! You should gladly and assuredly accept the little suffering you are subjected to today and live a meaningful life, like Job and Peter. ... You are people who pursue the right path, those who seek improvement. You are people who rise up in the nation of the great red dragon, those whom God calls righteous. Is that not the most meaningful life?"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Practice (2)). Pondering God's words, I

understood that being arrested for my faith and suffering that way was being persecuted for the sake of righteousness, and there was meaning in that suffering. Through this hardship, I saw my own rebelliousness and corruption, and my true stature. I gained discernment over the great red dragon's demonic essence—how it hates and resists God. That was God's love for me. I thought of Job undergoing trials of such magnitude—hillsides of livestock and all of his family's possessions were stolen, his children died, and boils broke out all over his body. Yet he didn't blame God and he didn't say anything sinful. What he said in the end was, "Jehovah gave, and Jehovah has taken away; blessed be the name of Jehovah" (Job 1:21). Job gave resounding testimony for God. I was really moved, and resolved to follow Job's example, to stand firm in my witness for God no matter how much I suffered. At this realization, I came before God and made a prayer of submission, ready to leave everything regarding my family in His hands and submit to His sovereignty and arrangements.

I was released in late December 2005. My son was still at university and we were very hard up, so I found a job. But a little over a month later, my boss told me, "The police came and talked to me and said you're a believer in God. They told me I have to fire you." I was so angry to hear that. I'd been let out of prison but the Communist Party still wouldn't leave me be—they were still depriving me of my right to survival. They truly were despicable and evil! My son should have been able to graduate in 2006, but because I'd been sentenced to labor for my faith, the school refused to issue him a diploma, on the grounds that he had failed a class, albeit by just a few points. So he had to repeat a year of school. But the following year they again refused to issue him a diploma, with the same excuse. Seeing that other classmates hadn't passed two or three of their classes but still graduated, he asked his teacher about it, who said, "Don't

you know that your mom is a believer in God?” It wasn’t until then that we realized the school was looking for excuses not to give him a diploma because of my faith. In the end, they just gave him a certificate of attendance. Without a diploma it was hard for him to find a job, and he felt very depressed. He just wanted to stay home all the time and didn’t even want to talk. Seeing him so miserable was really upsetting for me. After all his years of studying he was implicated because I had been in prison, and ultimately was deprived of his diploma and was having a hard time finding a job. I felt some weakness inside. My son was a believer, too, so we prayed and read God’s words together, and saw this: **“The utmost faith and love are required from us in this stage of work. We may stumble from the slightest carelessness, for this stage of work is different from all the previous ones: What God is perfecting is mankind’s faith, which is both invisible and intangible. What God does is convert words to faith, to love, and to life. People must reach a point where they have endured hundreds of refinements and possess faith greater than Job’s. They must endure incredible suffering and all manner of torture without ever leaving God. When they are submissive unto death, and have great faith in God, then this stage of God’s work is complete”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. The Path ... (8)). Because I had been arrested and persecuted by the Communist Party, my husband had died and my son couldn’t find work. The Party had cut off our source of income and wanted to use this situation to get me to blame and betray God. But God was using this situation to perfect my faith. If I was still able to follow and submit to God through the course of so much pain, it would show I had true faith. The Communist Party wanted to leave us without a way to live, but by relying on God in life and going forward with His sustenance and guidance we could still get by. After that, my son and I frequently read and



fellowshipped on God's words together, and he was gradually able to emerge from his state of distress. He said he clearly saw that all these miseries were caused by the Communist Party; that it is the Party that ravages lives while God brings mercy and salvation; and that only God can bring us light, and following God is the right path in life. He said he wanted to believe in and follow God earnestly. After that, we both took to foraging for wild herbs and mushrooms to sell at market, so that we could more readily attend gatherings and do a duty. That way, without too much effort, we could have enough money to get by on.

After experiencing arrest and persecution by the Communist Party, I fully saw its demonic essence—how it hates and resists God. It claims to guarantee freedom of religion, but secretly conducts mass arrests of Christians, torturing them and sentencing them to prison, while also oppressing and persecuting their family members, destroying countless Christian families. I came to hate it and rebel against it from the heart—and knew that I was irreconcilably opposed to it. I also personally experienced God's love and the authority of His words. When I was arrested and sentenced to prison, when my husband died, when my son couldn't get his university diploma, and when I was living in misery with no way out, it was God's words that gave me faith and strength, and led me to overcome the weakness of the flesh. Without God's care and protection, I never would have made it to this day. I'm truly grateful for God's love and salvation. No matter what sort of oppression and hardship I face in the future, I'll follow God to the very end.

## **99. The Days of My Forced Psychiatric Hospitalization**

By Zhang Mingxia, China

In August 2011, a colleague preached God's gospel of the last days to me. At that time, I had been exposed to chemical drugs for a long time due to my work and suffered from aplastic anemia, so I often took time off to rest and had plenty of free time. Through praying and reading God's words, I came to understand that heaven, earth and all things were created by God, as well as that humans came from God, and so we should believe in God and worship God. I also learned that in the last days, God comes incarnate and expresses words to completely save humankind from sin, and people can only be saved by accepting God's work of the last days. After that, I often attended meetings and read God's words. Unexpectedly, my illness slowly began to improve. After seeing this result, my family supported my belief in God.

In December 2012, the CCP started a new round of suppression and persecution of The Church of Almighty God. At that time, many brothers and sisters were arrested. One day, my older brother, who was the deputy director of the Water Conservancy Bureau, called me to his house. He said to me, "The government is cracking down on The Church of Almighty God. Once it finds out that someone believes in Almighty God, or that their family members believe, they will immediately be dismissed from public office. Then, neither they nor their family members will be allowed to join the Party, and their children will not be allowed to join the army or go to university. You have to stop believing in God from now on. Now, if you are arrested, your children won't be able to take the university entrance exam or join the army, because they won't pass the political background check. You

have to consider the future of your children! Besides, your sister-in-law and I both work in the government departments and hold important positions. If you are caught, it will affect us. If that happens, who will arrange work for your son in the future?” My sister-in-law and nephew both joined in the call for me to stop. It made me very sad, because my older brother had been very good to me since I was a child, and he often took care of our family’s needs. He arranged my daughter’s job. I had always been very grateful to him. If he were to lose his job because of my belief in God, how could I ever face him? And if the whole family was implicated, they would hate me for it. With this in mind, I felt a little upset, so I had to promise them I wouldn’t go to meetings or preach the gospel. But my older brother was still worried, and before leaving, he specifically asked my husband to watch me more closely.

After that, my husband often came to see me in the workshop out of fear that I would go out for meetings, and he wouldn’t let me read God’s word at home. I had to read it in secret, out of fear my husband would find out. I thought back to the past, when my family members didn’t stop me from believing in God and attending meetings. Now, because they feared the power of the CCP, they had banded together to persecute me, and I couldn’t attend meetings or read God’s word normally. I felt that believing in God in China was a very difficult thing. Later, I read these words from God: **“Because it is embarked upon in a land that opposes God, all of God’s work faces tremendous obstacles, and accomplishing many of His words takes time; thus, people are refined as a result of God’s words, which is also part of suffering. It is tremendously difficult for God to carry out His work in the land of the great red dragon—but it is through this difficulty that God does one stage of His work, making manifest His wisdom and His wondrous deeds, and using this**

**opportunity to make this group of people complete. It is through people's suffering, through their caliber, and through all the satanic dispositions of the people of this filthy land that God does His work of purification and conquest, so that, from this, He may gain glory, and so that He may gain those who will bear witness to His deeds. Such is the entire significance of all the sacrifices that God has made for this group of people"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Is the Work of God As Simple As Man Imagines?). **"There is not one person among you who is protected by the law—you are, instead, sanctioned by the law. Even more problematic is that people do not understand you: Be it your relatives, your parents, your friends, or your colleagues, none of them understand you. When you are abandoned by God, it is impossible for you to continue living on earth, but even so, people cannot bear to be away from God, which is the significance of God's conquest of people, and is the glory of God"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Is the Work of God As Simple As Man Imagines?). God's words struck a chord in me. In China, this atheist country, for believing in God and following the right path in life, we not only aren't protected by the law, but we are condemned and arrested, and even our relatives are implicated. The CCP truly is the devil that hates God. If one believes in God and follows God in China, they are bound to be persecuted, but it is through this suffering that God perfects people's faith. Once I understood God's intention, I felt less miserable, and I was willing to rely on God to experience this environment. Two months later, my husband's supervision of me became less strict, and I started to secretly attend meetings again.

In December 2015, I preached the gospel to a friend. Her family found out about it and threatened to report me. My older brother feared my arrest would affect his career, so he and my family sent me to a mental hospital

after Spring Festival. On that day, my son, daughter, brother, and sister were all present. My daughter had depression, and she claimed her recent insomnia as an excuse to go inside and get some medicine when we passed by the mental hospital. I didn't expect that when she came out, she also brought two nurses with ropes in their hands to tie me up. I finally realized that they were going to send me to the mental hospital, but it was too late to run. My family pushed and dragged me forcibly into the hospital. I struggled desperately and said I wasn't sick, but no one paid attention. When I saw my family members being so ruthless, I thought, "No matter how you persecute me, I will never give up believing in God." Two nurses pushed me down onto the bed when I wasn't paying attention and forcibly gave me an injection. After the injection, I felt dizzy and too tired to resist. Then, they gave me a so-called examination. The nurse said my blood pressure was too high, and that I should be hospitalized there overnight for observation. That night, I was lying on the hospital bed, thinking back on what happened that day, and felt a burst of sadness. I didn't expect my family to send me to a mental hospital just to protect their own interests and not be implicated by me. It was so cruel. How could these people be my family? They were just a pack of devils! The next day, I saw the medical certificate, which said, "Severe mental disorder due to cultic beliefs; prone to immediate manic episodes when in contact with believers in God." I also heard from the doctor that I had to be hospitalized, because treating my condition would take time. My daughter said to me, "My uncle has already explained to the hospital director. You should stay here for a few days and think clearly about things. We will pick you up when you tell us you don't believe in God anymore." I was furious: Because I believe in God, I was being called mentally ill for no apparent reason. This was all the fault of the CCP! If not for the CCP's arresting and persecuting people who believe in

God, fabricating lies to mislead people, and implicating their families, I wouldn't have been sent to a mental hospital. At this time, I remembered the words of God: **“The devil tightly trusses all of man's body, it veils both his eyes, and seals his lips firmly shut. The king of devils has rampaged for several thousand years, right up until today, when it still keeps a close watch on the ghost town, as if it were an impenetrable palace of demons; this pack of watchdogs, meanwhile, stare with glaring eyes, deeply fearful that God will catch them unawares and wipe them all out, leaving them without a place of peace and happiness. How could the people of a ghost town such as this ever have seen God? Have they ever enjoyed the dearness and loveliness of God? What appreciation have they of the matters of the human world? Who of them can understand God's eager intentions?”** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. Work and Entry (8)). God's word was entirely correct. For someone born in the country of the great red dragon, there is no freedom at all. The CCP frantically suppresses and persecutes Christians, and even mental hospitals have become places where it tortures Christians. I was perfectly sane, yet I had been trapped in a mental hospital to force me to betray God. I hated the CCP, the mastermind behind everything. The more it persecuted me, the more it allowed me to clearly see its demonic essence of hostility to God, and it also strengthened my faith in following God.

Later, the doctor said to my family, “Don't worry. Leave her here for a few months, and she will not believe in God when she comes out.” My family believed this was true, so they did the paperwork to commit me. After I was committed, just like the other patients, I was given three injections a day, and had to take pills at each of my three meals under the supervision of nurses. At first, I refused the injections and medicines, and

the nurse threatened me, “If you don’t cooperate, we will tie you up and force you to take them!” I had personally seen how patients who refused treatment were tied to the beds and tortured. Having witnessed their cruel torment of the patients, I felt I had no choice but to obey.

One day at lunch, I didn’t go to eat. I sat on my stool and wept silently, thinking to myself, “I’m not sick, but I’m locked up here, and I don’t even have anyone to speak to. I can’t read God’s word, I can’t do my duty, and I have to take injections and medicines every day. When will this end? ...” The more I thought about it, the sadder I became. Seeing that I wasn’t going to eat, the nurse threatened me, “If you don’t eat, we’ll tie you up with ropes, like the patient just now. We’ll tie you to the bed, put a catheter in your nose, and pour the food in!” I thought of the pitiable sight of the patient I had just seen, who was screaming in misery, and I was very afraid, so I had no choice but to go get my meal. During my hospital stay, every day I saw that patients who didn’t cooperate with treatment were abused and screamed in pain, which was frightening to watch. I felt like I was in a lair of demons, and I was very nervous every day. I am very worried that spending all day with these mentally ill people, and the doctors forcing me to take medicine and giving me injections, I might truly become mentally ill. If I became mentally ill, I wouldn’t be able to believe in God anymore, so what was the point of my life? In my pain and helplessness, I prayed to God to ask Him to lead me on the road ahead. After I prayed, I remembered God’s word: **“What does this word, ‘faith,’ refer to? Faith is the genuine belief and the sincere heart that humans should possess when they cannot see or touch something, when God’s work does not align with human notions, when it is beyond human reach. This is the faith that I speak of. People are in need of faith during times of hardship and refinement, and faith is something that is followed by refinement;**

**refinement and faith cannot be separated. No matter how God works, and no matter your environment, you are able to pursue life and seek the truth, and seek knowledge of God's work, and have an understanding of His actions, and you are able to act according to the truth. Doing so is what it is to have true faith, and doing so shows that you have not lost faith in God"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God.

Those Who Are to Be Made Perfect Must Undergo Refinement). God's words made me understand that this environment was a test for me to see if I had genuine faith. I thought of Daniel when he was thrown into the lions' den. God was with him, and God sealed the lions' mouth, so Daniel wasn't hurt a bit. I saw that Daniel had faith in God, stood testimony for God, and witnessed God's deeds, so I should no longer live in fear and cowardice. I had to rely on my faith in God to stand witness for God. When I realized this, I felt less pain in my heart.

Once, after two in the morning, I was sleeping when someone patted me twice. I sat up suddenly and was startled to see someone standing beside my bed. The mental patient just laughed at me and babbled nonsense. I chased her away, but she wouldn't leave and continued to laugh. At this time, the other patients in the room were also awakened, and finally, the nurse came over and drove her away. Most of these mentally ill people were possessed by evil spirits, and I was required to remain with them every day. If this continued, sooner or later, the torment would drive me insane as well. The more I thought about it, the more painful it became. Over those days, I stopped singing songs and stopped contemplating God's word. I was very despondent, and I thought it would be wonderful if someone could just fellowship with me. I prayed to God and told Him about my difficulties and pain. One morning, three or four days later, while watching TV with the other patients in the lobby, I saw a woman, about thirty years old, who I



seemed to recognize from somewhere. She felt familiar. After I spoke with her, I found out that she believed in Almighty God. Like me, she was forcibly sent to the mental hospital because her family listened to the CCP's rumors. After meeting a sister there, I was very happy to finally have a companion to talk to. God arranged for me to meet a sister there, and for us to fellowship and encourage one another, so I was very grateful to God.

The mental hospital was guarded by medical staff 24 hours a day, so we had to find opportunities in secret to fellowship on God's words, discuss our experiences and understandings, and help and support each other. Once, in the patient activity hall, I whispered to her, "I'm afraid that if I stay here for too long, I will become mentally ill myself, so I really want to leave, but I can't, and it's very painful." She answered by whispering a passage of God's word to me: **"Man's heart and spirit are held in the hand of God, everything of his life is beheld in the eyes of God. Regardless of whether or not you believe this, any and all things, whether living or dead, will shift, change, renew, and disappear in accordance with God's thoughts. Such is the way in which God presides over all things"** (The Word, Vol. 1. The Appearance and Work of God. God Is the Source of Man's Life). She also told me about her experience in the mental hospital, and told me that God controls everything, so I shouldn't be afraid, and should rely more on God. I realized that everything is in God's hands, and without God's permission, Satan couldn't do anything to me. With the guidance of God's word, I no longer felt so afraid.

Next, my sister and I wrote down the words of God and hymns we remembered and passed them to each other as a means of encouragement. Once, my sister gave me a note with a hymn on it. The lyrics read: **"With God's exhortations in my heart, I will never bend the knee to Satan. Though our heads may roll and our blood may spill, the backbones of**

**God's people cannot be bent. I will bear resounding testimony for God, and humiliate devils and Satan. Pain and hardships are predestined by God, and I will be loyal and submit to Him unto death. Never again will I cause God to weep or worry. I will offer up my love and loyalty to God and complete my mission to glorify Him"** (Follow the Lamb and Sing New Songs, I Wish to See the Day of God's Glory). These lyrics inspired me, and I felt my heart grew stronger. No matter how Satan the devil treated me, I would never betray God. I had to stand witness and humiliate Satan.

The head doctor basically spoke to me once a week, and each time she persuaded me to give up my belief in God. I knew she followed and worked for the CCP, so I ignored her. Afterward, she came to talk to me again and asked me what I thought about my hospitalization. I thought, "You all know I'm not sick, but because I believe in God, you treat me as if I was mentally ill and keep me trapped here. You force me to take medicine and injections every day. You, as doctors, torment me with no conscience at all, and now you ask me what I think?" I asked her accusingly, "I'm not sick, so why do you insist on saying I am and treat me like a mental patient?" She glanced at me, then said viciously, "I'll tell you plainly, the examinations we did for you don't matter. What matters is that your belief in God makes you abnormal. Your condition is much more serious than those mentally ill people. And just so you know, you aren't the first or the last of believers in Almighty God we've had here. If you insist on believing, you'll be imprisoned for a few years. I have the final say here. Whether you're sick or not depends on my decision!" I was very angry when I heard this. Hospitals were meant to be a place to save the dying and care for the sick, but now they had become a place for the CCP to torture Christians. We believe in God and walk the right path in life, but the CCP uses all manner of despicable means to harm people who believe in God. They are devils to

the core, a political party of pure evil! Because of my belief in God, I was persecuted by the CCP, rejected by my family, and tortured by doctors with drugs. I saw clearly that the CCP is nothing but the demons come to earth. They are Satans that resist God and harm people. Later, my sister and I preached the gospel to those believers in the Lord we met in the hospital. Some were sent to the hospital for treatment because of insomnia, and some were forcibly brought in by the government because of their belief in the Lord. In the end, a few of them accepted Almighty God's work of the last days.

Due to the forced injections and medicine from the doctors every day, my health was getting worse and worse. I felt dizzy and tired, and I always wanted to sleep, my shoulders felt heavy, and I could barely find the strength to lift my arms. I asked the doctors to stop the medication, but they didn't listen. Later, my condition got worse and worse. I always had a headache, and it felt like I was in a trance every day. I was always flustered, uncomfortable, and very irritable; my hands shook, and I couldn't hold things with chopsticks. I often had nightmares, and my memory also deteriorated. I often put things down and immediately forgot where I put them, and I couldn't maintain my train of thought. Later, I would be looking for things that were still in my hands, and I was very flustered every day. I used to feel flustered for only a few minutes, but later these periods grew from ten minutes to half an hour. It was very uncomfortable, and my mind was out of my control. It felt like I had a mental disability, and I always wanted to cry. I silently prayed to God in my heart, asking Him to save me from Satan's cruelty. After more than 40 days in the hospital, my daughter came to see me. That day, I was sitting in the hall with my head down. When I heard my daughter call me, I raised my head and looked at her for a few seconds in a stupor, then I slowly stood up, walked to her, pulled on her

arms, and cried, “Take me home, take me home....” After a moment, I started laughing again. My daughter was surprised and said, “Why do you become like this? Are you really sick?” My daughter took me to my older brother’s house. He scolded her, “Why did you bring your mother back?” Then he asked me whether I still believed in God. At that time, my consciousness was a little clearer, and I firmly said, “Yes! I believe in God, I pursue the truth, and I try to be a good person and follow the right path. Why shouldn’t I believe?” My sister-in-law said, “It looks like you haven’t been there long enough. Time to send her back.” I said angrily, “You already subjected me to that barbaric treatment, and you still want me to go back. You’re too cruel! If you do this, you’ll be punished sooner or later!” When they heard me say that, they didn’t say anything else, and my older brother reluctantly asked my daughter to go through the discharge procedures for me.

After I was discharged from the hospital, I had headaches all the time, and I was in a trance every day. I often randomly fell into a daze. When the lights were turned off at night, I was very frightened, because I felt like I was back in the mental hospital, and I often had nightmares. According to my husband, I sometimes cried and laughed at random, and I often lost my temper at him. I was terrified, and I thought, “Am I really mentally ill? If so, how will I believe in God in the future?” I knelt down in front of the bed and prayed to God with tears in my eyes, “God, what I have become today was caused entirely by the great red dragon. I hate it! God, please protect me, please save me....” After I prayed, I felt a little calmer. Two weeks later, my condition improved significantly, and I was able to consciously control my emotions. Three months later, my mental state had basically returned to normal, and my mental well-being had improved a lot, but my

memory was still very poor. Half a year later, I started attending meetings and performing my duty again.

The forty-five days I spent living in the mental hospital caused a lot of damage to my mind and body. Through this torture, I clearly saw the CCP's demonic essence of hating the truth and being hostile to God. I thoroughly hated the CCP, the devil, and I rejected and rebelled against it from the heart. At the same time, I also saw through the essence of my family. Just because I believed in God and they were afraid of being implicated and having their status and future affected, they followed the CCP and tried devious means to force me to give up my belief in God. They even sent me to a mental hospital. They didn't care whether I lived or died. How could I consider them my family? They were devils! After experiencing this environment, I truly felt God's love and salvation for me. In the mental hospital, when I was afraid, suffering, and helpless, God used His words time and again to enlighten me, guide me, and give me faith and strength, and He arranged for a sister to help and support me. Without God's protection, those demons would have driven me completely crazy and insensible. I saw God's sovereignty and arrangements, omnipotence, and wisdom. I also truly felt that only God is my support at all times and that only God can save people, and I gained greater faith in God. Thanks be to God!

## 100. The Agony of Disguising Myself

By Muchen, China

One day in 2018, my leader assigned me to go support a newly established church. When I received this news, I was both surprised and nervous. It seemed that my leader must have thought quite highly of me; but how would my brothers and sisters view me if I couldn't do any real work? Would they think I wasn't such a good leader? If that happened, what dignity would I have left? As soon as I thought of these things, I became anxious and had trouble being at ease while doing my duties. A week later, my heart full of uncertainty, I set off for the new church. At first, when the brothers and sisters brought up questions, I was able to resolve them by combining God's words and principles with my own experience in fellowship. But later on they encountered some issues that I couldn't fully grasp. I didn't know how to resolve them, so I began to get nervous.

I remember during one particular gathering, the brothers and sisters had brought up some questions and difficulties they were facing in their work, and I just couldn't think of which aspect of the truth I should fellowship on to resolve these issues. I worried that they would think less of me, and I was a nervous wreck. I racked my brain, wanting to think of passages of God's words or principles to fellowship as quickly as possible, but the more agitated I grew, the more my mind went blank. Seeing the brothers and sisters sitting there quietly awaiting my response, I panicked even more, thinking, "If I can't resolve their issues, doesn't that mean that I don't understand the truth and am incapable of carrying out real work? What will the brothers and sisters think of me? That would be so embarrassing!" Ultimately, I just bit the bullet and selected a passage of God's words to fellowship. In truth, I knew as clear as day that I was just

reciting words and doctrines and that this wouldn't resolve their problems. But seeing that my brothers and sisters were listening and nodding their heads, and didn't comment further, I thought no more of it. Another time, a sister asked about her daughter who was so busy with work that she couldn't regularly attend gatherings. The sister was concerned that because her daughter was not seeking the truth, she would lose her chance to attain salvation, and so she often reminded her daughter to read God's words and attend more gatherings. But at the same time, she was worried that pushing her daughter too hard might upset her. This issue really made the sister feel constrained, and she didn't know how she should proceed. At the time, I wasn't sure how I should fellowship with the sister in order to resolve her issue. I thought to myself, "There would be no way of justifying failing to provide any fellowship at all for this sister in front of everyone. This is my first time at this gathering group. If I can't fix any of their problems, won't the brothers and sisters think less of me and say I'm incapable of resolving issues through fellowship on the truth? No matter what, I have to salvage this situation somehow." So, I fellowshiped, saying, "With regard to this issue, we must seek the truth and discern God's intention. God saves those who have true faith in Him and who love the truth. He never forces us to gather or do our duties, and so if your daughter doesn't pursue the truth, you can't force her to do so. You should submit to God's arrangements and refrain from acting according to your affections." The sister didn't say anything after I had finished my fellowship, but she was still furrowing her brow. Seeing that the sister's issue hadn't been resolved, the leader, Sister Wang Lin, offered her own fellowship: "You should still help your daughter and provide fellowship with love. In due time, it will become clear whether your daughter is a seeker of truth. If she is a true believer in God, then even if at first she has worldly desires and doesn't seek the truth, you must be

patient, accepting and lovingly supportive. Then, once she begins to grasp some of the truth, she will naturally start placing more importance on it. If she is not a lover of the truth, and places only nominal faith in God for the purpose of receiving blessings, then no amount of help or prayer for her will be of any use, because God does not save the disbelievers. So, let us first help and support her with love and then, once we know for certain what kind of person she is, we can decide how to treat her according to principle.” The sister nodded her head continuously, and I too had gained a clearer understanding of the issue. Wang Lin’s fellowship outlined a clear path of practice. But I wasn’t willing to acknowledge any of this out loud; if I made such an acknowledgment, I thought, the brothers and sisters would be even more apt to discern that I had only fellowshipped on doctrinal knowledge, and I would be a complete embarrassment. From that point on, I felt increasingly weighted down, terrified that I’d be unable to resolve the problems brought up by my brothers and sisters. Sometimes when I encountered difficulties, I wanted to fellowship with my brothers and sisters to hear their ideas and opinions. But then I’d remember that I was there to water and support them, and if I turned the tables and went to them for help, they’d certainly think less of me. I would go back and forth in my head, and right when I was about to say something, I’d second guess myself and remain quiet. There were times when I’d excuse myself to the bathroom, or make up an excuse to go handle some other business when a difficult issue arose and ask the brothers and sisters to first discuss among themselves. This way, no one could see me for what I really was. Whenever I did something like this, I would get down on myself, knowing that I didn’t have a firm grasp of the issue, and if I would just open up in fellowship and seek help from my brothers and sisters then I would gain a deeper understanding. At such times, I would always resolve to not avoid such situations in the



future, but whenever some difficulty arose, I'd instinctively want to safeguard my status and dignity. I'd either muddle through a discussion by speaking some words and doctrines, or just avoid the situation altogether. During that period, my state became gradually worse—I had no insight when I fellowshiped during gatherings, I kept hitting walls in my work, and it was becoming more and more laborious to do my duties. I felt so repressed and agonized from having to constantly put up a front and disguise myself. I even thought that maybe this duty was just too much for me, and I'd be better off going back to my previous duty. I realized that I was in a bad state, and so I prayed to God, “Dear God! I've found my work so laborious lately and lack clarity in my thinking. It seems as though You've turned away from me, but I don't know where I've gone wrong. Oh God, I would that You guide me to better understand myself.”

After that, I came across this passage of God's words: **“All corrupted humans suffer from a common problem: When they have no status, they do not put on airs when interacting or speaking with anyone, nor do they adopt a certain style or tone in their speech; they are simply ordinary and normal, and do not need to package themselves. They do not feel any psychological pressure, and can fellowship openly and from the heart. They are approachable and are easy to interact with; others feel that they are very good people. As soon as they attain status, they become high and mighty, they ignore ordinary people, nobody can approach them; they feel that they have a sort of nobility, and that they and ordinary people are cut from different cloths. They look down on ordinary people, put on airs when they speak, and stop fellowshiping openly with others. Why do they no longer fellowship openly? They feel that they now have status, and are leaders. They think that leaders must have a certain image, be a bit loftier than ordinary people, have**

**more stature and are better able to assume responsibility; they believe that compared to ordinary people, leaders must have more patience, be able to suffer and expend more, and be able to withstand any temptation from Satan. Even if their parents or other family members die, they feel they must have the self-control to not cry, or that they must cry in secret at the very least, out of sight of others, so that no one can see any of their shortcomings, defects, or weaknesses. They even feel that leaders cannot let anyone know if they have become negative; instead, they must hide all such things. They believe this is how one with status should act. When they repress themselves to this extent, has status not become their god, their lord? And this being so, do they still possess normal humanity? When they have these ideas—when they put themselves in this box, and put on this kind of act—have they not become enamored with status?”** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. How to Resolve the Temptations and Bondage of Status).

Through the revelation of God’s words, I realized that the reason I was finding my work so exhausting and grueling was that I had become too obsessed with reputation and status. Before I had come to that church, I had felt so free and unrestricted in gatherings with my brothers and sisters—there was no pressure, and if I didn’t understand something, I would bring it up for fellowship. But ever since coming to support that church, I had put myself up on a pedestal, thinking that I must be better and more skilled than the people there because I was there to support them. I believed that only by resolving every issue that my brothers and sisters raised would I be acting in keeping with my status. To earn my brothers’ and sisters’ admiration and acceptance, I disguised myself and put up appearances. Even though I clearly didn’t have a firm grasp of the issues, I wasn’t willing to open up and seek, instead insisting on muddling through with words and doctrines, deceiving my

brothers and sisters, and sometimes even finding excuses to avoid the situation altogether. I didn't have the slightest consideration for whether or not my brothers' and sisters' problems had been resolved, and I couldn't even get myself to say something as simple as "I don't understand this issue." Only then did I realize that I had placed too much importance on status, and that everything I did was in order to safeguard that status. The church arranged for me to go there to do my duty so that I could work with my brothers and sisters to resolve the problems and issues facing that church, but I didn't at all consider how best to do my duty and perform real work, instead I only thought of how the brothers and sisters would think of me, and how best to protect my status and dignity. I would even find ways of deceiving them in order to preserve my dignity and status. By neglecting my duties, not only was I causing myself to suffer, I was also harming my brothers and sisters and delaying the church's work. That must have made God find me so detestable and despicable. I had fallen into darkness—this showed God's righteousness, and I needed to dutifully reflect on myself and repent to God.

The next day, I opened up to my brothers and sisters about my recent state, and also brought up some questions I was having trouble with for fellowship. By fellowshiping together, and with God's guidance, we eventually gained a better understanding of these issues, and found a path of practice. After that, since I would still instinctively disguise myself when I encountered difficulties or couldn't grasp certain issues, not wanting to expose my weaknesses to my brothers and sisters, I prayed to God, asking for guidance. I then came across a passage of God's words which gave me a path of practice. Almighty God says: **"To free yourself from status's control over you, what must you do first? You must first purge it from your intentions, your thoughts, and from your heart. How is this**

achieved? Before, when you were without status, you would ignore those who were not appealing to you. Now that you have status, if you see someone who is unappealing, or who has issues, you feel responsible for helping them, and so spend more time fellowshiping with them, trying to solve some of the practical problems they have. And what is the feeling in your heart when you do such things? It is a feeling of joy and peace. So, too, should you confide in people and more often open up to them when you find yourself in difficulty or experience failure, fellowshiping your problems and weaknesses, how you rebelled against God, and how you then emerged from this, and were able to satisfy God's intentions. And what is the effect of confiding in them in this way? It is, without doubt, positive. No one will look down on you—and they may well envy your ability to go through these experiences. Some people always think that when people have status, they should act more like officials and speak in a certain way so as to be taken seriously and respected. Is this way of thinking correct? If you are able to realize that this way of thinking is wrong, then you should pray to God and rebel against fleshly things. Do not put on airs, and do not walk the path of hypocrisy. As soon as you have such a thought, you should address it by seeking the truth. If you do not seek the truth, this thought, this viewpoint, will take form and become rooted in your heart. As a result, it will come to dominate you and you will disguise yourself and craft your image to such an extent that no one will be able to see you through it or understand your thoughts. You will talk to others as through a mask that hides your true heart from them. You must learn to let others see your heart, and learn to open your heart to others and become close to them. You must rebel against the wants of the flesh and conduct yourself according to God's requirements. In this

**way, your heart will know peace and happiness”** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. How to Resolve the Temptations and Bondage of Status). God’s words helped me realize that in order to cast off the fetters of reputation and status, I had to learn to let go of my desire for status within my heart. In fact, no matter what duty I was performing or how much status I had, I was still deeply corrupted by Satan and had many inadequacies and deficiencies. This was completely normal—it’s not as if becoming a leader and having status means that someone suddenly becomes better than everyone else, gains stature, understands the truth and can grasp and resolve every issue. I needed to have a proper conception of myself. Later, whenever I wanted to safeguard my status and conceal my own inadequacies, I would do the exact opposite: I opened up and laid myself bare before all without pretense, allowing my brothers and sisters to see my true stature. When I came across a problem I could not resolve, I would realistically admit that I didn’t understand and seek the truth along with my brothers and sisters, complementing each other’s strengths and weaknesses. By practicing in this way, I felt much more free and relaxed, and my duty no longer seemed so exhausting.

There were still times, however, when I failed to put the truth into practice. One time, Wang Lin arrived at a gathering before me. I thought to myself: “She is already aware of my inadequacies and deficiencies from my last fellowship when I only spoke words and doctrines. If I once again fail to resolve my brothers and sisters’ problems, then she will certainly think even less of me. How will I swallow my pride then?” I became a bit anxious after this occurred to me and felt that there would be a lot of pressure on me to lead the gathering with her. I said to Wang Lin, “If you have any other duties to attend to, feel free to go, I can handle this gathering myself.” She left without responding. To my surprise, a few days later, she

said to me, “That day, I had originally planned on going over some of the problems and deviations in the work at the end of the gathering, but as soon as I arrived at the gathering place, you said I wasn’t needed there. I thought this over and decided I should bring your attention to some issues you’re having. This will be beneficial to you and the work of the church.” She told me that I was safeguarding my status and dignity in everything I did, always concealing my inadequacies and disguising myself, and that I failed to engage in any real cooperation with my brothers and sisters. It would be difficult for me to obtain the work of the Holy Spirit and achieve any results in my work given that I had set the wrong intention while performing my duties. Wang Lin’s comments made my face flush with embarrassment. I was ashamed of myself, and felt truly awful. What she had said was right: My job was to support the church, but because I was worried about being outed and disgraced, I found an excuse to send her off when she had wanted to work with me to identify and resolve problems as quickly as possible. She was more familiar with the church’s work, so how was I supposed to achieve good results without cooperating with her in performing our duties? Wang Lin had not only realized that I was without the truth reality and incapable of resolving issues, she had also discovered how obsessed I was with status and reputation. At that time, I felt completely humiliated. In the midst of my suffering, I came before God in prayer: “Dear God! Today Wang Lin pointed out my problems and deficiencies. I must learn from this situation and so I beseech You to guide me to gain a greater understanding of myself so that I may rectify my corrupted disposition and undergo a real transformation.” After prayer, I came upon a passage of God’s words that exposed my state at the time. Almighty God says: **“People themselves are created beings. Can created beings achieve omnipotence? Can they achieve perfection and flawlessness? Can they achieve proficiency in**

everything, come to understand everything, see through everything, and be capable of everything? They cannot. However, within humans, there are corrupt dispositions, and a fatal weakness: As soon as they learn a skill or profession, people feel that they are capable, that they are people with status and worth, and that they are professionals. No matter how unexceptional they are, they all want to package themselves as some famous or exceptional individual, to turn themselves into some minor celebrity, and make people think they are perfect and flawless, without a single defect; in the eyes of others, they wish to become famous, powerful, or some great figure, and they want to become mighty, capable of anything, with nothing they cannot do. They feel that if they sought others' help, they would appear incapable, weak, and inferior, and that people would look down on them. For this reason, they always want to keep up a front. ... What kind of disposition is this? Such people's arrogance knows no bounds, they have lost all reason. They do not wish to be like everyone else, they don't want to be ordinary people, normal people, but superhumans, exceptional individuals, or hotshots. This is such a huge problem! With regard to the weaknesses, shortcomings, ignorance, foolishness, and lack of understanding within normal humanity, they will wrap it all up, and not let other people see it, and then keep on disguising themselves. ... They do not know who they themselves are, nor do they know how to live out normal humanity. They have never once acted like practical human beings. If you pass your days with your head in the clouds, muddling through, not doing anything with your feet on the ground, always living by your own imagination, then this is trouble. The path in life you choose is not right. If you do this, then no matter how you believe in God, you will not understand the truth, nor will you be able

**to obtain the truth. To be honest with you, you cannot obtain the truth, because your starting point is wrong”** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. The Five Conditions That Must Be Met to Embark on the Right Track of Belief in God). The revelation of God’s words helped me realize the reason that I had always been instinctively disguising myself to win the admiration of others was that I was controlled by my arrogant disposition. I was merely a created being, so I couldn’t possibly understand everything and be completely clear on every issue. It was completely normal to encounter issues and difficulties in the course of doing my duty. However, as soon as I had achieved a certain status, I believed myself to be “extraordinary,” and failed to recognize my true self and confront my inadequacies. I was always trying to become some great, important person, some model of perfection, and so I disguised myself and put on a pretense at every turn to safeguard my image and status in the eyes of my brothers and sisters. I was corrupted and deeply influenced by satanic maxims like “A man leaves his name behind wherever he stays, just as a goose utters its cry wherever it flies” and “People need their pride just as a tree needs its bark.” No matter what group of people I associated with, I always wanted to leave the best impression and earn everyone’s admiration and praise, believing that only in so doing would I be living with dignity and character. Then, when my deficiencies and inadequacies were exposed in front of everyone, I suffered greatly and found ways to conceal and disguise those inadequacies. This latest instance was a perfect example: Because I had been worried Wang Lin would catch on to my charade, I intentionally sent her off so that I could conceal the fact that I didn’t understand the truth. In my quest to safeguard my own status and dignity, I didn’t give the slightest consideration to the work of the church, nor did I consider my own duty. I had been so selfish and vile! I realized that there were still so many actual issues to deal with in the



church, and if I didn't cooperate with Wang Lin, then the problems would not be solved. That would delay the work of the entire church, and cause harm to the lives of our brothers and sisters. I was sacrificing the interests of the church in order to preserve my image—was I not committing evil? God requires that we live as normal humans, worship and submit to God, and earnestly conduct ourselves and do our duties in keeping with God's requests. Yet I, in my wild arrogance, had become bereft of the rationality that any normal human should have, always aiming to project a perfect image of myself to earn the admiration of others. I was walking a path of resistance to God. If I didn't repent, then in the end I would be cast down into hell to receive punishment. When I realized all this, I was disgusted and ashamed of myself, and prayed to God, willing to repent and honestly and practically fulfill my duty as a created being.

Having made these realizations, I sought a path of practice to resolve my issues. I came across two passages of God's words that went as follows: **"In the presence of God, no matter how you disguise yourself, how you conceal yourself, or what you fabricate for yourself, God has a clear grasp of all your truest thoughts and the things hidden in your deepest, innermost parts; there is not one person whose hidden, inner things can escape God's scrutiny"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Six Indicators of Life Growth). **"You must seek the truth to resolve any problem that arises, no matter what it is, and by no means disguise yourself or put on a false face for others. Your shortcomings, your deficiencies, your faults, your corrupt dispositions—be completely open about them all, and fellowship about them all. Do not keep them inside. Learning how to open yourself up is the first step toward life entry, and it is the first hurdle, which is the most difficult to overcome. Once you have overcome it, entering the truth is easy. What does taking this step**

**signify? It means that you are opening your heart and showing everything you have, good or bad, positive or negative; baring yourself for others and for God to see; hiding nothing from God, concealing nothing, disguising nothing, free of deceit and trickery, and being likewise open and honest with other people. In this way, you live in the light, and not only will God scrutinize you, but other people will also be able to see that you act with principle and a degree of transparency. You do not need to use any methods to protect your reputation, image, and status, nor do you need to cover up or disguise your mistakes. You do not need to engage in these useless efforts. If you can let these things go, you will be very relaxed, you will live without constraints or pain, and you will live entirely in the light”** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Part Three). God searches man’s heart and mind—as for my corrupt disposition, my intentions and impurities, God was aware of every aspect of these things. No matter how I disguised myself and put up false fronts, my corrupt disposition remained, my stature was unchanged, and I still didn’t understand the truth or have the truth reality. Actually, not only had God detected my attempt at disguise, any sister or brother who understood the truth could also have seen right through my charade. My effort to disguise myself as a perfect person was simply a form of self-delusion and self-deception. It was not until then that I finally realized that putting up a front and disguising oneself in the name of status and dignity was a meaningless pursuit, and the more I wrapped myself up, the more I was exposed. This was a foolish way to live. Having realized these things, I consciously accepted God’s scrutiny, and when I felt like safeguarding my status and dignity, I would actively open up and practice the truth.

On the day before I left that church, I wanted to ask a sister if she still had any problems or difficulties to discuss, but I also worried that if I

couldn't help resolve her issues, then I'd make a fool of myself in front of her. I thought to myself, "I'll be leaving here tomorrow anyway; I'll practice the truth next time around." Just then, a passage of God's words came to mind: **"If, when some special difficulties befall you or you encounter some particular environments, your attitude is always to avoid them or to flee from them, to desperately try to reject them and get rid of them—if you do not want to put yourself at the mercy of God's orchestrations, are unwilling to submit to His orchestrations and arrangements, and do not want to let the truth take charge of you—if you always want to call the shots and to control everything about yourself according to your satanic disposition, then the consequences will be that, sooner or later, God will certainly set you aside or deliver you to Satan. If people understand this matter, they must quickly turn back and follow their road in life according to the correct path that God requires. This path is the right one, and when the path is right, that means that the direction is right"** (The Word, Vol. 3. The Discourses of Christ of the Last Days. Part Three). God's words helped me realize that, even though asking my sister if she had any issues or difficulties seemed insignificant, it was still a chance to relinquish my desire for status and dignity and practice the truth. If I continued to disguise myself and put on a false face to mislead others and safeguard my status and dignity, then I would never be able to free myself from the fetters and constraints of my corrupt disposition. I could no longer yield to my desires—I had to practice the truth and live out a semblance of humanity, to shame Satan. So, before I left, I proactively asked my sister if she had any problems or difficulties. When I felt I had a grasp of her situation I would provide fellowship, and when I didn't have an answer I said, "I don't know how to resolve this issue, let's seek an answer together." After practicing in this way, I felt very grounded and at peace.

I have really gained a lot from this experience. If I hadn't gone to that church to do my duties, resulting in my being exposed through this real situation, then I never would have realized that I had such an obsession with status, and that safeguarding one's status and dignity was a way of resistance toward God. The judgment and revelation of God's words helped me to break free from the fetters of status and dignity and stop disguising myself. Thanks be to Almighty God for saving me!



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